CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE
IN THE THEOLOGY OF COTTON MATHER

by

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PREFACE

This thesis originated in an effort to probe the American origins of the Great Awakening. Previous studies of the roots of this phenomenon have quite naturally sought to distinguish its message and techniques from those of the Puritanism of the period of 'spiritual decline' in New England, either emphasizing the influence of European Pietism, or positing that a 'personalization' of Calvinism by Edwards and the Tennents was responsible for the remarkable popular response in the 1730's and 40's. Some have detected a kind of pre-Revivalism in Solomon Stoddard's five 'harvests' of converts during his ministry in Northampton. But extensive study of Mather and his period have led me to conclude that the Puritan experiential tradition, which Mather called an "American Pietism," constituted the main rootage of the Awakening in its American phase. The form of existential Calvinism which Mather shared with most of the other Boston ministry -- and with Stoddard -- was substantially similar to the message at the core of the revivals of the next several decades. The new pastoral strategies which galvanized the old message to spark the Awakening, and the other factors (some of them rather obscure to historical investigation) which turned decline into renewal, are outside the scope of this inquiry. But this work significantly revises the historical image of Cotton Mather by placing him in the center of the genetic line which leads from the theocratic Puritans to the later evangelicals.

Much of the substance and direction of this thesis were suggested to me in the intensely interesting (and scholastically exacting) graduate seminars on Puritanism led by Dr. Lefferts Loetscher at Princeton Seminary. Dr. Loetscher's initiative in assigning me two papers on the 'spiritual decline' in America, and early Puritan devotional literature in England, and the introduction he gave me to Mather's Diary and the Manuductio ad Ministerium, are directly responsible for the thrust of this work (although of course I must bear the responsibility for the validity of the research and the conclusions). His subsequent encouragement and counsel, and his strong insistence on correct historical method, have been immensely helpful. I am grateful also to Drs. James Hastings Nichols and Edward A. Dowey, who have benevolently watched over the gestation of this study. For my initial interest in Puritanism I am indebted to Dr. Calvin Malefyt, Mr. Jay Green, and especially to Paul Woolley, who supervised my beginning studies in this area at Westminster Seminary. The staffs of the rare book divisions of the New York Public Library and the Boston Public Library, the microfilm divisions of Rutgers and Princeton Universities, and the Massachusetts Historical Society and the American Antiquarian Society, have been of great help in my research in Mather's published work and several important manuscripts. For additional comments and direction I must thank Dr. Clifford Shipton, Dr. James Smilie, and Dr. Franklin Coyle, as well as a number of colleagues in Mather research: Drs. Joyce Ransome, David Levin, and Robert Middlekauf. I am much indebted to Mrs. Irma Best for her labors in deciphering my third draft and typing the thesis, and to Dr. Louis Etherington for his more than generous help in collating and photoduplicating the final manuscript. I should also thank the Rev. Julian Alexander and others in my church for their assistance and patient endurance during this phase of my experience. For spiritual support and sacrificial aid in the course of these years I owe a great deal to my wife and family, and to Miss Susan Beers and the Rev. Donald Mostrom.

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INTRODUCTORY SYNOPSIS

This thesis is an attempt to explore the significance of Cotton Mather in American Church History and in the development of the Puritan tradition. Its contention is that Mather is best understood through the study of his theology of Christian experience. While previous accounts of Mather have portrayed him either as a reactionary defender of the Puritan *ancien régime*, as a prototype of liberal eighteenth-century rationalism, or as a strange synthesis of these opposites, this essay views him as a transitional figure in the movement of the American church from the theocratic strategy of the older Puritanism to the 'leavening' activism of later American Revivalism. If the roots of the Great Awakening are to some extent visible in Solomon Stoddard's five harvests of revival, they are no less evident in the American pietism of Mather, who both summarizes the past development of Puritanism and predicts its future.

Some influential accounts of Mather's period have viewed the utterances of the Mather party in Boston as the last gasps of a spent tradition, expiring in an intellectual blind alley while seeking ineffectively to adapt to the early American Enlightenment. This judgment may rest in part upon an incorrect understanding of the Great Awakening, which assumes that its message was a foreign importation from Continental Pietism. It is now clear that the Awakening arose in some measure independently in Europe and America, from sources within Puritanism and Pietism, movements which have a 'mysterious common root,' as Ernst Benz observes.[1] A study of New England preaching in the four decades preceding the Awakening reveals that the groundwork for this movement in Boston was carefully, if unconsciously, laid down during this period by a group of ministers initially led by the Mathers. An examination of Mather's life and his own concept of his ministry shows that he was both the leading synthesist of the Puritan past in America, and the most representative pre-Revivalist during his lifetime. The older Puritanism did not, therefore, simply expire, leaving in its wake a conflict between rationalists and enthusiasts; it moved out of its theocratic incarnation and assumed a new life in American Revivalism.

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[1] Ernst Benz, "Pietist and Puritan Sources of Early Protestant World Missions," *Church History*, XX (1951), 50.

While Cotton Mather was, as Thomas J. Holmes says, "an orthodox Protestant 'Liberal,'" a study of the general structure of his theology shows almost no departure from Reformation theology in the direction of the Enlightenment. Mather was in fact a passionate enemy of the new rationalism, although he was willing to use some of its terminology in order to reach and hold his audience. While there is a strong effort in his thinking to simplify Reformed orthodoxy and reduce it to biblical essentials, this is neither Enlightenment latitudinarianism nor a desperate effort to recapture the American mind through the presentation of fewer beliefs and more piety. It is rather an effort to follow the lead of English progressives like Baxter, and Continental figures like Spener and Francke, in distilling the essence of biblical faith out of the expanded intellectual systems of Lutheran and Reformed orthodoxy. But if Mather's theology was doctrinally simplified, it was made practically complex by its incorporation of elements from Christian traditions other than his own, in which his erudition made him a fascinated visitor --

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[1] T. J. Holmes, Cotton Mather: A Bibliography of His Works, I (Cambridge, Mass., 1940), p. xii.

Patristic, Medieval, and Counter-Reformation Catholicism; and Lutheran Pietism. This involved synthesis was energized by another component which was alien to much of scholastic orthodoxy, Mather's millenial optimism, which was a main source of his activism and his lifelong mood of revivalist expectation.

Mather made some attempt, also, to simplify the Puritan theory of conversion. This was no evidence of an anthropocentric shift from Calvinism, as some have suggested, since a great part of the Puritan theory went far beyond both Calvin and the biblical evidence in extrapolating the practical implications of the sovereignty of God. The hypercalvinism which terrified potential converts, and produced a recurrent paralysis even in those professing conversion, may have made a large contribution to the 'spiritual decline' of the old Puritanism in America. In dealing with this problem, however, the cautious side of Mather's progressive conservatism is more evident than his ability to innovate, since he retained the prolonged 'process of conversion,' which fixed the convert's gaze on his own unworthiness and inability to turn and required experiential evidence from the Christian's inner and outward life in order to confirm assurance. His persistent application of this, and other Puritan prescriptions, to his own spiritual life, has much to do with his reputation for psychological imbalance among his critics; and this thesis attempts to indicate the extent to which the Puritan experiential theory of the spiritual life operated with a built-in pathology. Mather did, however, make an effort to 'buffer' this approach by a frequent emphasis on the grace and mercy of God, and a repeated invitation to all his hearers to make a trial at converting. On occasion he moves to the brink of Wesleyan Arminianism in an effort to comfort one sector of his audience, but returns immediately to the hard Puritan line as he seeks to convict the complacent. His approach foreshadows, but does not fully duplicate, the conversion theory of the post-Edwardsean revivalism of the nineteenth century. But in the fulness of his stress on conversion, his 'loading' of all the content of the Christian life into its initial experience, he is consistent with both the Puritan past and the Revivalist future. In order to produce the infusion of mystical ecstasy which his Puritanism required as the guarantee of regeneration, Mather adopted the intense delineation of Hell and Heaven which also became a staple in the later Revivalism.

The proliferation of the means of grace in Mather's practice, in contrast to the simplicity of his theology, is the result of his effort to sustain the intensity of the initial mystical assurance of the convert. In Mather's affinity for the asceticism of the Fathers, and his unconscious emulation of later Catholic devotional practice, is reflected in the fact that a large part of the Puritan tradition of Christian experience was produced by the adaptation of Medieval and Patristic piety to a Reformed theological base. His zeal in practicing and promoting this methodism is one of the features which has most repelled the critics of the last two centuries, but it was normal within Puritanism, except that in Mather it aspires to heroism.

In his treatment of sanctification, Mather retains the typically deep Puritan understanding of normative spiritual health as "the power of godliness." He also has a much deeper vision of the depth and complexity of sin than many critics have seen in him. While he gives relatively less space to the problems of sanctification than he does to the struggles of conversion, his handling of the subject is firmly anchored in the traidtion of Augustine, Calvin, and such Puritans as John Owen. His supposed moralism is hard to maintain in the face of the abundant evidence that he detested real Enlightenment moralists, and grounded his ethical urgency firmly on the doctrines of grace as interpreted by Puritan evangelicalism. His activism is quite typical of the Puritan tradition and the Pietism of his friends at Halle, although few men in these traditions have worked as hard as Mather at organizing their activity and recording this effort. There is no doubt, however, that Mather is guilty of 'legalism,' whether this is defined as an ethical use of the Bible as a codebook, or as an imperfect apprehension of life under grace. In his concern to avoid 'cheap grace' and preserve the powerful ethical incentives in Puritanism, Mather retained the idea of 'legal terrors' even as a threat to the committed Christian. Similarly, his desire to avoid lowering the standard of ethical behavior led to his retention of the Bible as a law-code. While we might suppose that the enthusiastic side of Mather's personality would emancipate him from these attitudes, the fact is that his concept of communion with God still requires a lengthy and arduous mystical ascent into the presence of God, so that a continuous ethical guidance by the Spirit in the Quaker pattern is obviated. While with other Puritans he speaks much of 'walking with God,' he does not seem to have in mind a continuing intimate fellowship in the recognition of God's presence; this can usually be attained only through prolonged labor in meditation and prayer. Mather does however allow for occasional supernatural guidance by impulse, like Whitefield and other Revivalist leaders. He felt himself to be the recipient of many such experiences, which he believed were mediated by angels and given to especially important leaders and 'gap-men' before the coming millenial awakening. Like Luther, most Puritans and Pietists, and some of the men in the Great Awakening, Mather was sensitive to what he interpreted as spiritual conflict, the resistance of evil angels to his ministry. His doctrine of sanctification and his theory of pastoral care gave considerable attention to temptations, depressions and delusions which he felt were Satanically induced. Much of this theory is directly traceable back through Puritanism into the great Catholic mystical tradition.

Mather's understanding of the outworking of piety in the practical mission of the church is an epitome of Puritan theory on the subject, but it is enriched by his eager adoption of new strategies of mission from London and the Continent. Cell-groups such as the Pietist collegia had been functioning in New England apparently from the beginning of the Colonial Period, and Mather was a fervent advocate of these, so that it was natural for him to assume the American leadership in the formation of the new Reforming Societies invented in London in the 1690's. While these proved to be a failure because of their repressive legalism, Mather found inspiration in Halle for a more positive evangelical concern for the spiritual and social wellbeing of Boston, and his mind poured out a host of projects in the early 1700's. Some of these died stillborn, and others provoked intense hostility even where they proved obviously beneficial; but many either foreshadowed or helped establish the patterns of voluntary ecumenical action which flourished in the Benevolent Empire of the Nineteenth Century. In all of this animation of projects Mather was not simply fighting a desperate holding action, as critics have suggested. He was working consciously to help bring in the millenial awakening which his eschatology led him to expect in the 1730's, and his prayers during the prime of his life are full of conviction that the great spiritual revolution which will end in Christ's return is soon to occur, preceded by remarkable outpourings of the Holy Spirit and ingatherings of souls. As a correlate of this chiliastic expectation, Mather (like the other main figures in the Puritan/Pietist stream) was firmly dedicated to the goal of ecumenical union among evangelical Protestants, and worked all his life to establish a climate and a doctrinal basis within which reunion might be possible, since for him it was an indispensable prerequisite for the parousia. Another such prerequisite, in his understanding, was the vigorous extension of church's mission among those peoples not yet fully reached by the gospel. His millenial hopes led him to a special concern for the Jews, but he was the most active spokesman of his generation in New England on behalf of the ministry to Negroes and American Indians. He responded to Halle's pioneering East Indian mission with contributions of money and publicity, and suggested that similar work be carried on by American Christians. In few of these emphases was he absolutely original, but he had a knack for appreciating, correlating, and collecting trends within the Christendom of his time which would prove to be the heart of the future. In examining his life and thought we thus find not only the essence of Puritan development in the century preceding him, but we also find gathered the genetic seeds of that Nineteenth Century evangelicalism which was a mutation from the old Puritan stock.

PART I: THE BACKGROUND OF MATHER'S EXPERIENTIALISM

Alas, The *Vanity* which attends Humane Affairs! As there are many Men and Things that are scarce mentioned in *True History*, which deserve a mention more than some that are universally celebrated; What *Hero's* are buried among those who lived before the Days of *Agmemnon?* And *Walter Plettenberg* is less known than a Turkish Pyrate: What has been *ponderous* has (as my Lord *Bacon* expresses it) been sunk to the Bottom in the Stream of *Time*, while we have *Straw* and *Stubble* swimming a top: So, 'tis a thing, that may be too truly, but can't be too *sadly*, complained of; That the Instances wherein *False History* has been imposed upon the World, are what *cannot be numbred*. *Historians* have generally taken after their Father *Herodotus*: And even *One of themselves*, Vopiscus by Name, has expressly said of them, They are all of them *Lyars*: *This Witness is True*!

-- Cotton Mather, *Manuductio ad Ministerium* (1726), p. 60

You must have a Name *reviled on Earth*, 'tis so you may be the fitter to find a Name *written in Heaven*. There will be a Resurrection of *Names*, as well as of *Bodies*, in the Day when God shall Raise the Dead. All the *Good that you have done*, all your *Prayers*, all your *Alms*, and the *Steps* of your watchful *Walk with God*, all the brave Efforts of your *Self*-*Denial*, all the continual *Contrivances* to serve Christ and his People, and your Neighbours, in which you have been swallowed up every Day, not one Day without them for many, many years together; they, being *Sprinkled with the Blood of the Lamb*, shall be found in the Lord's Book of Remembrance; they shall be proclaimed in the Golden Streets of the City of God.

-- Cotton Mather, *The Right Way to Shake Off a Viper* (1720), p. 12

CHAPTER I

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF COTTON MATHER: A RE-EVALUATION

1. The Problem of Interpreting Mather

Even more than most Puritans, Cotton Mather retains a dark image in the popular mind. What W. F. Poole said in 1869 is unfortunately still true: "The present generation of youth is taught that ninteen persons were hanged, and one was pressed to death, to gratify the vanity, ambition, and stolid credulity of Mr. Cotton Mather."[1]

Among serious scholars, Mather's portrait has brightened a little with the revival of sympathetic and objective Puritan scholarship in the last half-century. He is largely exonerated in the matter of the witchcraft scandal, the worst blot upon his name. But he continues to be handled with a lingering distaste even by those who present themselves as the champions of Puritanism. As David Levin comments, "one of the few phenomena more puzzling than his strange character is his portrayal by some of our leading writers. Even some of those who have fought most intelligently to rescue the seventeenth-century Puritans from iconoclastic Menckens, Parringtons, and J. T. Adamses have regarded Cotton Mather as expendable."[2] One of the main sources of this distaste is reflected even in Levin's statement: the difficulty in penetrating and classifying his "strange character." The fact is that since the early nineteenth century, critical historians who have not simply been in a rage against Mather have been baffled by their inability to understand him. This is reflected in the latest full treatment of Mather, that of Perry Miller, who finds Mather "in a hundred respects . . . the most intransigent and impervious mind of his period, not to say the most nauseous human being, yet in others . . . the most sensitive and perceptive, the clearest and most resolute."[1] This kind of puzzled judgment has a long lineage of precursors from the early Nineteenth Century down to the present. The first to express it in print was probably Henry Ware, Jr., in 1831, struggling to reconcile Mather's reputation at Harvard for instability and poor judgment with the apparent intelligence, liberality, and zeal for the public good of this admittedly "most wonderful man."[2] After the appearance of Charles W. Upham's Lectures on Witchcraft (1831), the first decisive attack on Mather since that of Robert Calef in 1700, other writers labored to harmonize his supposed agency in the Salem affair with his own contrary testimony and the evidence of integrity in his own writings and those of his contemporaries. These strands of ambiguity, surrounded by other testimonies more positively denouncing or acquitting Mather, had accumulated into a bewildering, scarcely penetrable thicket of contrary opinions by the beginning of this century, so that even a defender of the Mathers was forced to conclude that "it is impossible now to estimate finally either his character or the quality of his accomplishment."[3]

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[1] W. F. Poole, "Cotton Mather and Salem Witchcraft," North American Review, CVIII (1869), 338.

[2] David Levin, "The Hazing of Cotton Mather," New England Quarterly, XXXVI (1963), 147.

This estimate is surely too pessimistic. We should be able to understand Mather as well as any historical figure can be understood. We know more about him, his inner and outward life and his ideas, than we do about any other figure in American church history, simply from the mass of documents which he left -- the great diary covering most of his adult life, the longest listing of published writings produced by any American, and a wealth of unpublished letters and manuscripts. But the very bulk of this material has only contributed to the problem of understanding Mather: he has been left to suffer at the hands of historians the fate of the elephant in the fable who was examined by blind men. Few of his critics have been able to bring themselves to read him whole, and consequently from those who have explored part of the territory we have reports variously describing him as a reactionary and a progressive; as a self-centered neurotic and a sublime mystic; as the last gasp of theocratic Puritanism and the earliest harbinger of the Enlightenment in America.

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[1] Perry Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), p. 476.

[2] Henry Ware, Two Discourses Containing the History of the Old North and New Brick Churches (Boston, 1821), pp. 14, 19-20.

[3] Kenneth B. Murdock, "Cotton Mather," DAB, XII (1933), 387.

It is true that Mather was a complex personality -- probably no more so than any other human being, but then few other human beings have revealed themselves to us as fully as he did. Despite this complexity, however, and the inconsistencies produced by growth and change in the course of a long life, there is much more integrity in his character and work than has been suspected. But there is a quality in Mather which affects historians like the ink-blots in the Rorschach test: it draws up angelic or demonic archetypes from the unconscious and projects them inexorably on the helpless subject.

> For our society Mather represents a type toward which neutrality is almost inconceivable. . . [He] has been a remarkably useful emblem of puritanical meddling, self-right
> pedantry, and reaction, and the efforts of several commentators during the last century to sketch a more complex, more accurate figure have had little effect on prevailing opinion either in the scholarly community or in popular lore. We seem almost bound to adopt a judicial attitude in the very act of imagining Mather's character and naming its traits. . . We cannot be sure that he was not the perfect model for that hateful image of our national demonology, but it should be salutary to remind ourselves, every century or so, of how persistently we fit very meagre evidence to assumptions that are

astonishingly simple-minded."[1]

This work is an attempt to get beyond the confusion, the unjustified criticism, and the unbalanced adulation of previous accounts of Cotton Mather to find an integrated picture of the man and his work. It proceeds on the assumption that the key to his character and achievements is his theology, and that this in turn is most easily understood in terms of its emphasis on Christian experience. Since a great part of the difficulty in evaluating Mather today is due to stereotypes which earlier historians have built on a relatively small basis of evidence, and which have an odd way of persisting and coloring the judgments of later historians even when that basis has been destroyed, we will first examine the secondary Mather literature, to track down the lines of conflicting testimony which are the main source of the problem of interpreting Mather.

The division of witnesses in Mather's case goes back to the period of his ministry in Boston, although the further we trace the matter back, the more muted is the criticism against Mather and the more consistent the portrayal of him given by his friends and enemies, as T. J. Holmes notes.[2] Speaking on his behalf are his family and his ministerial colleagues. Samuel Mather, his son, presents him as an able pastor with broad ecumenical sentiments, and a brilliant scholar with a world reputation; but above all as a deeply godly man, with a piety epitomizing the Puritan ideal.[3] In exact agreement with this estimate were the other ministers of Boston, including the pastor of the Brattle Street Church, Benjamin Colman, whose latitudinarianism had often brought him into conflict with Mather. Colman considered Mather

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[1] David Levin, "The Hazing of Cotton Mather," New England Quarterly, XXXVI (1963), 148, 169.

[2] T. J. Holmes, "Cotton Mather and His Writings on Witchcraft," Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America, XVIII (1924), 31-59.

[3] Samuel Mather, The Departure and Character of Elijah Lamented (Boston, 1728), p. 186.

> . . . The first Minister in the town, first in Age, and Gifts, and in Grace, as all his Brethren very readily own. I might add . . . the first in the whole Province, and Provinces, of New England, for universal Literature, and extensive Services. Yea, it may be among all the Fathers in these Churches, from the beginning of the Country to this . . . None of them amassed together so vast a Treasure of learning, and made so much use of it, to a variety of pious intentions, as this our Rev. Brother and Father, Dr. COTTON MATHER . . . His Works will indeed inform all that read them of his great Knowledge, and singular Piety, his Zeal for God, and Holiness and Truth, and his desire of the Salvation of precious Souls; but it was Conversation and Acquaintance with him, in his familiar and occasional Discourses and in private Communications, that discovered the vast compass of his Knowledge, and the Projections of his Piety; more, I have sometimes thought, than all his Pulpit exercises. Here he excell'd, here he shone; being exceeding communicative, and bringing out of his Treasury things new & old, without measure. Here it was seen how his wit and fancy, his invention and quickness of thought, and ready apprehension, were all consecrated to God, as well as his heart, will, and affections.[1]

This is in the context of a funeral eulogy, of course, but Colman was an honest man not given to hyperbole, and he adds that Mather was not without faults.[2] His estimate of the central thrust of Mather's character is in the body of the funeral sermon, which deals with Enoch's eminent walking with God. Thomas Prince compares Mather to Elijah; like that prophet, he intimates, Mather was a man with passions like other men -- specifically with a fiery spirit on some occasions -- but with a deep zeal for true religion. He remembers Mather as "a strenuous Asserter of Liberty both civil & sacred: and of extensive Charity . . . He seem'd to have an inexhaustible Source of divine Flame & Vigour . . ." And yet, contrary to the later caricatures of Mather as nervous and impulsive,

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[1] Benjamin Colman, The Holy Walk of Blessed Enoch (Boston, 1728), pp. 23-4.

[2] W. B. O. Peabody, a careful though severe critic of Mather, felt that the eulogies were more reliable estimates of the man than much of what was said of him during his lifetime. Vide his Life of Cotton Mather (Boston, 1836), p. 342.

Prince says that "He enjoyed a perpetual Calm" through his private devotions.[1] Joshua Gee portrays Mather in the part of Aaron, perhaps as the literary spokesman for the Puritan movement in New England of which his father was the Moses, and observes that like Aaron he endured some hard things from the flock of which they later would find occasion to repent. Gee, who was Mather's assistant during his last four years, found his co-worker to be "pious, but not affected . . . He was peaceable in his temper: but zealous against sin . . . He was a vigorous defender of the reformed doctrines of grace, and of the mysteries of revealed religion . . . And yet he was catholick in his charity to all good men, tho' differing from them in circumstantials and modalities."[2]

The testimony against Mather had begun some years earlier, as these veiled rebuttals indicate. Robert Calef's More Wonders of the Invisible World (London, 1700) was basically an attack on the residual superstition carried over from Catholic (and ultimately pagan) sources by the theologians and legal casuists of the Puritan movement, including Perkins, Gaul, and Bernard, and lately represented by Richard Baxter and the Mathers. The book incidentally intimates that both the Mathers were credulous and perhaps salacious, and accuses them of an effort to drum up another witchcraft scare in Boston.[3] The same charges are repeated in Francis Hutchinson's Historical Essay Concerning Witchcraft (London, 1718), but Hutchinson states more bluntly that the circulation of the works of Baxter and the Mathers on witchcraft fomented the delusion, and that the ministers, and particularly the younger Mather, whipped it on to magnify their own reputation as exorcists.[1] These allegations were recirculated by Dr. William Douglass and other opponents of inoculation during the smallpox epidemic of 1721 in Boston, but they do not appear in print again for the duration of the eighteenth century. Gov. Thomas Hutchinson, examining the two opposing streams of testimony carefully in 1764, accepts the reasoning of Calef and Hutchinson on the nature of the delusion involved in the trials, but rejects their treatment of the ministers, placing the principal blame on the magistrates.[2]

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[1] Thomas Prince, The Departure of Elijah Lamented (Boston, 1728), pp. 9, 20-21.

[2] Joshua Gee, Israel's Mourning for Aaron's Death (Boston, 1728), pp. 13, 19.

[3] Robert Calef, loc. cit., in Narratives of the Witchcraft in Massachusetts, ed. by George Lincoln Burr (New York, 1914), pp. 299-334, 392-3.

Cotton Mather felt that the main motive behind Calef's attack on him and on the Puritan approach to witchcraft was theological in character. In his Diary, he spoke of Calef as a "Sadducee."[3] Calef cannot be formally convicted of total antisupernaturalism, since he acknowledged in his book the existence of angels, devils, and self-styled witches. Moreover, he used a deeply Protestant argument to attack the Puritan treatment of witches: he asserted that the whole error lay in building up an extra-biblical casuistry on the opinions of men in order to handle instances of supposed witchcraft. Although the appeal from tradition to scripture is classically Reformed, it was also one of the trademarks of the party in England which desired at this time to push on to a more radical reformation, and which would ultimately discard both creeds and orthodox Christology at Salter's Hall in 1719. It is not surprising, then, that when the case of Cotton Mather is again taken up by historians critical of his person and work, it is by men who represent a historical extension of the theological position implicit in Calef and Hutchinson, who rely for evidence on the witness given by these men.

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[1] Francis Hutchinson, loc. cit., 73, 77,

[1] Francis Hutchinson, loc. cit., pp. 73, 77, 93.

[2] Thomas Hutchinson, The History of Massachusetts, II (Boston, 1764), 24-63.

[3] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 264 (June, 1698).

In 1821, Henry Ware, Jr., the current heir to Mather's pulpit, published two sermons incorporating an historical review of the Mather dynasty and later leaders in the church. Ware is reasonably moderate in his estimate of Mather's part in the witchcraft scandal, though he does assert that Cotton Mather must have been more involved in the affair than his father, because of his supposed want of judgment and credulity. Ware reads Calef and Mather with considerable lack of historical perspective, concluding that the latter was an exceptionally vivid case of superstition, while actually Mather represented the norm, and Calef was the exception.[1] Ware's estimate of Mather breathes the most refined essence of the later Bostonian Enlightenment:

> His original powers of mind were doubtless equal to those of his father, and his industry and learning far superior; but he was deficient in judgment and good taste, and therefore, with all his attainments, became rather an extraordinary than a great man. His character was a very mixed one. You would regard him with wonder and admiration, but hardly with a feeling of entire confidence. His religious sense was as strong as his father's, but it was mingled with more superstition, and was perpetually bordering on fanaticism, and running into the unprofitable observances of the ascetics.[2]

Ware's main evidence for the deficiency in Cotton Mather's judgment is the persistent failure of Harvard College to elect him President.[3] He does not suspect that part of the underlying reason for the hesitation of the directors, especially in the 1720's, was the same distaste for vigorous Puritan Calvinism which Ware himself reveals.[1]

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[1] Henry Ware, Two Discourses Containing the History of the Old North and New Brick Churches (Boston, 1821), pp. 16, 17.

[2] Ibid., p. 14.

[3] Ibid., p. 19. The same estimate of Mather's imbalance and credulity is present in John Eliot's brief sketch of Mather in his Biographical Dictionary (Boston, 1809), pp. 312-13, which suggests that it was the common Harvardian attitude by this time. Eliot indicates that part of the prejudice against the younger Mather was based on his extravagant and anachronistic literary style.

It is impossible to read the accounts of Mather by Ware and certain of his successors without being aware that they are viewing him not only through Enlightenment glasses, but also in the wake of the controversy at the time of the Great Awakening -- Ware has some shuddering words about that period of "religious excitement" and the active part played in it by Joshua Gee, Mather's successor and spiritual godchild[2] -- and that the historians themselves are in the thick of the Unitarian controversy, in which the ideological successors of the Mathers are vigorously attacking them. Considering these conditions, it is surprising and praiseworthy that most of them are as careful, objective, and gracious as Ware seeks to be.[3] Others, like the staunch anti-Calvinist apologist, C. W. Upham, were less restrained. Upham, who even more than Calef is responsible for the dark side of Mather's reputation, came to the study of the witchcraft affair with a respect for Mather's character and industry, but was led by his study of newly available evidence (the Diary and certain letters) to formulate the image of Mather as a scheming, bloodthirsty hypocrite.[4] In his work we find the elements of nineteenth-century anti-Puritanism in

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[1] Henry Ware, op. cit., p. 36.

[2] Henry Ware, op. cit., pp. 22-29.

[3] The election of Henry Ware, Sr., To The Hollis Chair of Divinity at Harvard in 1805, was the beginning of the warfare between the Orthodox and Unitarian Congregationalists. Vide DAB, XIX (New York, 1936), 447.

[4] C. W. Upham, Lectures on Witchcraft (2nd ed., Boston, 1832; 1st ed. 1831), pp. 283 ff. Otho Beall and Richard Shryock are thus mistaken in their contention that the main blow to Mather's reputation came after the publication of the Mather papers by the Massachusetts Historical Society in 1868 (Cotton Mather, First Significant Figure in American Medicine [Baltimore, 1954], p. 1).

America fully emerging into an iconoclastic stereotype: the reactionary ministers (and chiefly the Mathers) scheming to hold power in the colony by fomenting the Salem affair and trying to rekindle it in Boston, their total loss of face among the populace after the scandal had broken, and their hypocritical attempts to cover up by maintaining that they had been against the trials all along. Upham accuses Mather of blatant lying and many other forms of corruption and dishonesty, and rings the changes at length upon the superstition of the ministers.[1] It is not surprising that W. B. O. Peabody, another Boston Unitarian theologically trained by the younger Henry Ware,[2] who published a fairly moderate and careful biography of Cotton Mather in 1836, expresses difficulty in fitting this picture of Mather into the rest of the man's character as revealed in his work and through other witnesses. Peabody's solution is to make him out as a schizoid personality, not consciously scheming for power but driven by subterranean pride, and equipped with the weaknesses which earlier critics described plus a few new ones: impulsiveness, indiscretion, refusal to repent his mistakes in the Salem incident, a "strangely perverted" moral sense, and a vicious temper. Peabody suspects that Mather was seeking to drum up a "religious revival" in his attempts to exorcize Margaret Rule, and he holds up for ridicule Mather's sense of divine guidance and his struggles and ecstasies in prayer. But with all his inability to sympathize with Mather's religious temper, Peabody is fair in citing his virtues and his pioneering labors for social causes which flowered in Peabody's own century, such as temperance and slavery; and he does correctly state that Mather's enemies did not include the general public, but only the members of one religious party in Boston.[1]

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[1] Upham himself was later tarred with the same brush that he used on Mather, by no less a Puritan critic than Nathanael Hawthorne. Upham, in a moment of exceptionally poor judgment, fired Hawthorne from his civil service job; and the writer proceeded to make the historian his model for Judge Pyncheon, "a superb, full-blown hypocrite, a large-based, full-nurtured Pharisee." _Vide_ Randall Stewart, "Charles Wentworth Upham," _DAB_, XIX (1936), 121-2.

[2] G. H. Genzmer, "William Bourn Oliver Peabody," _DAB_, XIV (1934), 343-4.

Unfortunately Peabody's treatment, which at least attempted to balance off the conflicting accounts of Mather, and often achieves brilliant insights into his character, was less heeded during the rest of the century than Upham's. Josiah Quincy's account, in his History of Harvard University (1840), was written while the author's administration as president of the college was under attack by Trinitarian Congregationalists; and Samuel Eliot Morison observes that his book is a conscious retaliation against the conservatives in his own time through an attack on their ancestry.[2] It endorses all of Upham's conclusions, but goes beyond them in vituperation, depicting Mather as a headstrong fool who joined disloyalty to his usual poor judgment in his later preference for Yale over Harvard.[3] Few subsequent accounts of the Mathers are quite as unrelievedly vitriolic as Quincy's; but according to W. F. Poole the majority of lesser histories and textbooks in the Nineteenth Century continued to reflect Upham's account, which was reprinted in 1859 in an enlarged edition.[4] More important works to follow Upham's interpretation were Sprague's Annals, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, and Bancroft's massive work on

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[1] W. B. O. Peabody, Life of Cotton Mather (Boston, 1836), passim.

[2] S. E. Morison, "Josiah Quincy," DAB, XV (1935), 308-11.

[3] Josiah Quincy, The History of Harvard University (Cambridge, Mass., 1840), pp. 55-72, 132-53, 201-29, 330-46, 482-8, 558-60. The earlier History of Harvard University by Benjamin Peirce (Cambridge, Mass., 1833), pp. 49-71, 136-9, portrays Mather as a great man with a few blemishes of judgment and taste, and passes over the witchcraft incident with favorable words for both Mathers.

[4] W. F. Poole, "Cotton Mather and Salem Witchcraft," North American Review, CVIII (1869), 337-8.

American history.[1] At the end of the line of Mather antagonists in the Nineteenth Centory are Brooks Adams[2] and Charles Francis Adams, whose metaphor of the 'glacial age' of Puritan ascendency in New England perfectly summarizes this school of intepretation.[3] It is significant that Adams yokes the names of Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards, whom he describes as two great, awkward, abhorrent boulders left on the historical scene by the Puritan glacier.

By the middle of the century, however, Mather had begun to accumulate a few friends among historians, some of them in unlikely places. An orthodox defender, Enoch Pond of Bangor Seminary, wrote in 1844 to vindicate the Mathers against the witchcraft allegations of Upham, Bencroft, and especially Quincy, and presented Cotton Mather as the inventor of most of the central notions behind the Benevolent Empire, though continuing to concede his poor judgment and credulity.[4] Chandler Robbins, a moderate Unitarian who occupied the pulpit of the Second Church after Emerson had succeeded Ware in that position in a brief tenure from 1829-32, was chairman of the committee which published the Mather papers, and subsequently wrote a much fuller account of the history of the Second Church than Ware's. Robbins not only defends the Mathers from the more serious charges of the Upham school, but he also stands up for Cotton Mather's character very perceptively:

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[1] W. B. Sprague (Ed.), Annals of the American Pulpit, I (New York, 1857), 189-95 (the sketch is by a later and considerably different Joshua Gee); J. L. Sibley, Biographical Sketches of Graduates of Harvard University, III (Cambridge, Mass., 1885), 156-8; George Bancroft, History of the United States of America, I (New York, 1890), 50-64.

[2] Brooks Adams, The Emancipation of Massachusetts (2nd and rev. ed., Boston, 1919), pp. 417-39 (1st ed., 1887).

[3] Charles Francis Adams, Massachusetts, its Historians and its History (Boston, 1893), pp. 65-89.

[4] Enoch Pond, The Mather Family (Boston, 1844), pp. 98-138.

> I am convinced that few historical characters are less understood than COTTON MATHER. He has paid the penalty always attached to singularity. The protuberance of a few eccentricities has thrown all the elements of his character into false perspective. His oddities stand in the light of his virtues. They give a grotesqueness to his whole image . . . His virtues are in nature far more prominent and striking than his faults. The latter are more accidental and occasional; the former, more constant and permanent. The one seem to have been rather temporary waverings from the real point of his life's aim, like the oscillations of the disturbed needle; while the other evidently mark the true line of his earlier and later aspirations, principles, and efforts.[1]

Robbins praises Mather's transparent honesty even in revealing his faults, and his industry and his zeal to do good, and follows Pond and Peabody in observing that "most of the reformatory and benevolent movements which have signalized the last quarter of a century were anticipated by him."[2] Robbins goes on to reject most of the charges against Mather in the witchcraft affair, criticizing the Upham school for failure to understand Mather's "credulity" in terms of his historical context, misreading his Diary utterances, and mistakenly transferring the blame for the Witchcraft affair from the magistrates to the clergy. The most that Robbins can say against him is that he was impulsive and 'pendulous' if Calef is to be credited, and that he made an error of judgment in trying to write a partial defense of the government's conduct of the trials. Robbins does not attempt to deal very thoroughly with negative testimony like Calef's; he seems so charmed with Mather's character as revealed in his writings that he is simply willing to throw out contrary witnesses. Another kind of defense of Mather appeared some years after Pond and Robbins' works, the _New England Tragedies_ of Longfellow (1868). Influenced by the original sources -- the poet incorporates some of Mather's phrases into his work -- and probably also by Robbins and Pond, Longfellow presents Mather as a courageous man of God attempting to dampen the zeal of the judges at Salem. The new edition of Upham in 1869 took occasion to throw dust at Longfellow's treatment,[1] but W. F. Poole in turn attacked Upham in the same year, in a lucid dissection of the latter's historiography.[2] Poole accuses of Upham of jumping to conclusions from meagre evidence and reading Mather's mind beyond the limits of possibility, putting him on trial by the scientific standards of the Nineteenth Century, neglect of important evidence and apparent misinterpretation or concealment of other data, and too much regard for Calef's "unreliable" personal judgments on the Mathers. Poole's article seems to leave Upham's work in a shambles. The latter draws some blood on minor issues in his rebuttal,[3] but Poole held grimly to his conclusions in his later article on the Salem tragedy in Justin Winsor's Memorial History of Boston.[4]

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[1] Chandler Robbins, _A History of the Second Church, or Old North, in Boston_ (Boston, 1852), pp. 68, 71.

[2] _Ibid._, pp. 75-7.

The two full-length biographies of Cotton Mather which appeared almost simultaneously at the end of the Nineteenth Century follow Pond, Robbins and Poole in their generally positive attitude toward Mather. Both are largely derived from Mather's Diary, and both present what is more or less an enlarged and historically broadened version of Mather-as-seen-by-the-Mathers. A. P. Marvin's The Life and Times of Cotton Mather (1892) is essentially a dramatization of the Diary with commentary and historical annotations.[5] It was written by a pastor with a theological perspective nearly identical to Mather's, and it simply presents a good statement of what Mather thought he was about without probing too deeply into the historical significance or the personal complexities of the man. Barrett Wendell's Cotton Mather, the Puritan Priest (1891), attempts a psychological analysis of its subject, conducted on the basis of that fin-de-siecle Bostonian "devout free thought" which was one of the ultimate mutations of the tradition of Ware and Robbins. Despite his inaccurate and forbidding title, Wendell is out to prove that "it was a good man they buried on Coop's Hill one February day in the year 1728;"[1] and he accepts most of Mather's account of his motives and actions in the Salem affair, and forgives what he cannot accept. Much of his charity here springs from his conviction that the inconsistent areas in Mather's character spring from neurotic traits which he could not help: a sensitive and passionate emotionalism, driven activism, and megalomanic pride, either inflamed or expressed through Mather's abnormal religious practices.

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[1] C. W. Upham, Salem Witchcraft (New York, 1869).

[2] W. F. Poole, "Cotton Mather and Salem Witchcraft," North American Review, CVIII (1869), 337-397.

[3] C. W. Upham, "Salem Witchcraft and Cotton Mather, The Historical Magazine, Second Series, VI (1869), 129-219.

[4] Justin Winsor, Ed., The Memorial History of Boston, II (Boston,), 1881), 130-72.

[5] A. P. Marvin, The Life and Times of Cotton Mather (Boston, 1892), passim.

> Cotton Mather had for years been a religious enthusiast whose constant ecstasies brought him into such direct communication with Heaven as he believed the witches to maintain with Hell; in other words, he had for years been, what he remained all his life, a constant victim of a mental or moral disorder whose normal tendency is towards the growth of unwitting credulity and fraud.[2]

The net effect of Wendell's book was to reinforce Poole's refutation of the Upham school and to exonerate Mather from much of what Nineteenth Century criticism said about him. Like Peabody, Wendell is a shrewd judge of some of the weaker points in Mather's character. Nevertheless, Wendell's total failure to comprehend Puritan mysticism led him to retain some questionable features from the older histories, and to inaugurate a new style of misunderstanding Mather, specializing in amateur psychoanalysis. But the rehabilitation of Mather's reputation continued during the early decades of this century. Thomas J. Holmes, Mather's bibliographer,[1] wrote in 1924 that most of the nineteenth century literature on the witchcraft scandal was out of harmony with the truth because the historians had "tuned their fiddles to Calef's key." Holmes claimed that the very size of the Mather bibliography is graphic and unanswerable proof against the charge that Mather lost his popularity because of Salem affair, and that on the contrary Mather continued to the end to be almost a matinee idol of the pulpit, in demand as a speaker in outlying districts and preaching to a congregation of 1500 on Sundays. Holmes judges Mather's religious ecstasies to be no sign of neurosis, but rather a genuine expression of mystical piety accompanied by a deep sense of sin.[2] George Lyman Kittredge set out to defend Mather's scientific judgment and intellectual eminence against the charges of weakness and credulity, in a series of carefully documented papers and a massive history of witchcraft, concluding that "It is easy to be wise after the fact, -- especially when the fact is two hundred years old."[3] Most positively of all, Clifford Shipton attacked the whole theory of the Puritan era as an intellectual glacial age, maintaining that the Puritan establishment operated on a wide base of popular support, and that anti-Mather sentiment was locallized to a small clerical party in Boston, since "Calef himself seems to have comprised a very large part of his minority party, and . . . he did not have the same standards of intellectual honesty that his opponents showed . . . The picture, which is built up of logic, a dislike of New England, and Calef's statements, is not supported by contemporary records."[1] Shipton documents the moderating efforts of the Mathers in the witchcraft affair, and presents Cotton Mather as a religious liberal who had to smuggle in progressive ideas carefully under the glares of conservative laymen. The picture of the younger Mather as an intellectual pioneer is enlarged in further detail in the recent work of Otho Beall and Richard Schryock on his medical contributions, which takes his scientific judgment with utter seriousness and recognizes him as the most significant figure in American medical history before the Nineteenth Century.[2]

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[1] Barrett Wendell, Cotton Mather, the Puritan Priest (New York, 1891), p. 3.

[2] Ibid., p. 109

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[1] T. J. Holmes, Cotton Mather: A Bibliography of His Works (Cambridge, Mass., 1940).

[2] T. J. Holmes, "Cotton Mather and His Writings on Witchcraft," Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America, XVIII (1924), 31-59.

[3] George Lyman Kittredge, Witchcraft in Old and New England (Cambridge, Mass., 1929), p. 372; and cf. the same author's "Cotton Mather's Election into the Royal Society," Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, XIV (1911), 81-114; "Some Lost Works of Cotton Mather," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, XLV (1912), 418-79; "Cotton Mather's Scientific Communications to the Royal Society," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, XXVI (1916), 3, 18-57.

It would appear that all this careful historiography would have turned the tide of scholarship in Mather's favor by this time, but the negative stream of testimony has persisted up to this writing. James Truslow Adams, writing in 1921, accepted most of the conclusions of earlier Adamses about Mather, but expressed them more moderately.[3] Vernon Parrington's analysis of Mather in 1927 ignored the witchcraft scandal to concentrate on the psychological vein which Wendell had opened up, but without Wendell's charitable objectivity. Mather is presented as a petulant, irritable, sulking, garrulous, meddlesome, scolding sexual psychopath, whose diary is "the product of a crooked and diseased mind, a treasure-trove for the abnormal psychologist which would be inconceivable if it were not in print"; Mather is described as a bourgeois soul who loved respectability and refused to fraternize with the poor, "a morbid New England flagellant, a Puritan Brother of the Cross," only to be compared to that other abnormality, the elder Edwards.[1] Another psychoanalysis-at-a-distance, the popular account of Ralph and Louise Boas in 1928, is somewhat more sympathetic, but finds in Mather a morbid preoccupation with death, a persecution complex, tendencies to hypochondria, and a compulsive urgency which drove him to live in a constant state of feverish excitement. According to the Boas', the madness of Mather's third wife was the effect of sexual frustration induced when Mather channelled all his energies into mystical experience, only to produce a singularly boring life "curiously lacking in historical charm," unable to "see into the heart of things" through critical analysis -- a life which "could never leave a mark on succeeding generations," and which bequeathed us nothing more valuable than an account of its spiritual interests.[2] Kenneth Murdock, in his biography of Increase Mather of 1926 and several subsequent studies, extricates the Mathers from guilt in the Salem trials but judges Cotton to be less stable than his father, "the apotheosis of intense Puritan character,"[3] a mixture of obvious nervous and moral failings,[4] "given to those transports of religious feeling which have seemed to some to be evidence of an unsound mental constitution."[1] Samuel Eliot Morison discounts most of the testimony of Robert Calef, "who had it in for Cotton Mather, [and] tied a tin can to him after the frenzy was over . . . [which has] rattled and banged through the pages of superficial and popular historians."[2] But Morison is still not entirely happy with either Mather: Increase was "a curious compound of ambition, emotion, and cold intellect," and his son is accused of bad judgment, pedantry, and colossal egoism.[3]

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[1] C. K. Shipton, "The New England Clergy of the 'Glacial Age,'" Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, XXXII (1933), 24-54.

[2] O. T. Beall and R. H. Shryock, Cotton Mather, First Significant Figure in American Medicine (Baltimore, 1954).

[3] J. T. Adams, The Founding of New England (Boston, 1921).

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[1] V. L. Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought (New York, 1927, 1930), pp. 98-117.

[2] R. and L. Boas, Cotton Mather, Keeper of the Puritan Conscience (New York, 1928), passim, and pp. 256-270.

[3] K. B. Murdock, Increase Mather: the Foremost American Puritan (Cambridge, Mass., 1926), p. 3.

[4] K. B. Murdock, "Cotton Mather," DAB, XII (New York, 1933), 386-9.

Most of the negative treatments of Mather during this century have thus absolved him of extraordinary guilt in the witchcraft scandal, and have concentrated on analysis of psychological and moral problems along the lines of Wendell's biography, but less sympathetically. Some of this criticism is very penetrating as far as it goes, and yet much of it is strangely rooted in the assumptions of the witchcraft literature of the Calef/Upham school, as if the critics could not shake off these conclusions even when they have discarded their premises. In most cases I believe this results from a partial reading of Mather viewed through the lens of older secondary works. We have not yet seen a study of Cotton Mather which has been based on all the primary sources, even those which are published; but there is some significance in the fact that the two most extensive treatments of Mather, the biographies of Marvin and Wendell, have been more favorable toward the man and his work. Unfortunately the latest work to review Mather at any length, the second volume of Perry Miller's New England Mind,[1] is another unbalanced and oversimplified appraisal, which combines serious flaws with some brilliant insights. Miller continues to picture Mather as a "frenetic genius" filled with egotism and false unction, whose schizophrenic admixture of brilliance and virtue with Pharisaism is almost more annoying than sheer scoundrellism. He absolves the Mathers of trying to retain and defend the theocratic tenure of Puritanism, in the sense of brute power, but instead pictures their struggle as an effort to preserve the intellectual substance of Puritanism, the theology of the Covenant. He sees Cotton Mather as ultimately diluting and transforming the older Calvinism in a gradual capitulation to the Enlightenment, and finds Mather's increasing stress on Christian experience to be simply a 'pietism of the disinherited' -- in this case, of the ruling aristocracy which has been displaced even from the place of intellectual command. Miller even insists on tying Calef's tin can back on by a most peculiar and refined argument: Mather is said to have prostituted Covenant theology in his book on the Salem trials, and Calef is supposed to have sensed this somehow, though I cannot see any signs that he knew there was such a thing. Miller even takes sides with Douglass in the matter of smallpox inoculation, thus becoming the first historian since Douglass himself to pretend that his methods were more scientific. Miller admits that he finds reading Mather a wearysome practice, and we shall have reason to conclude that his portrait is based on an incomplete study of the sources and informed by a personal dislike of the man and his life-style.

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[1] K. B. Murdock, _Selections from Cotton Mather_ (New York, 1926), p. xxiii.

[2] S. E. Morison, _The Intellectual Life of Colonial New England_ (New York, 1956), p. 263.

[3] _Ibid._, pp. 194-7, 258-69; S. E. Morison, _Harvard College in the Seventeenth Century_ (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), II, 177-8, 417, 598-507, 535-554.

Since Miller's work, however, new scholarship has pointed toward a more positive and much more consistent understanding of Mather and his place in American church history.[1] David Levin of Stanford has published several studies on Mather, protesting against the distortions of Mather's image by unscientific historiography, and is presently at work on a long biography of Mather which will study his thought, his development as a writer, and his life in the community of Boston.[2] Mrs. Joyce Ransome has recently completed a thesis on "Cotton Mather and the Catholic Spirit," which presents him as a progressive ecumenist.[3] Evidently both of these scholars have approached Mather from a sympathetic but basically non-theological perspective, endeavoring to enlarge our vision of the liberal intellectual side of Mather. To my knowledge, however, the present work is the only primarily theological study of Mather now in progress, and the first that has been done. A brief earlier work which has influenced this thesis, however, is Ernst Benz' paper on the relationship between Mather and German Pietism, published in Church History in 1951.[1] This connection was earlier noted by Kuno Francke in several monographs,[2] but has gone relatively unnoticed by students of Mather and also by those who have written about the circle of European Pietists with whom Mather corresponded. Benz' article stresses the missionary and ecumenical interests which Mather shared with the Pietists, and traces its roots to a common eschatological expectation which reminds Benz of the spiritualism of Joachim of Fiore, and which consists in the eager expectation of a new age of the spread of the gospel under the impetus of a great outpouring of the Spirit.

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[1] Perry Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge, Mass., 1953).

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[1] It is only fair to add that not all new scholarship points in that direction. W. R. Manierre of William and Mary, approaching Mather from a literary point of view, offered a perceptive explanation of the rationale behind Mather's style in his unpublished doctoral dissertation, "Cotton Mather and the Plain Style" (U. of Michigan, 1958), but reverts to brilliant but one-sided analysis of Mather's 'neurosis' in his introduction to Mather's Diary for the year 1712 (Charlottesville, 1964), confirming the fact that the Diaries are the main stone of stumbling for Mather students. Like Manierre, Robert Middlekauf of Stanford, who is engaged in writing a large-scale analysis of the impact of the entire Mather family on New England, appears to agree with many of Miller's conclusions on Mather, but he contests very suggestively Miller's concept of the relation between piety and intellect in Puritanism ("Piety and Intellect in Puritanism," William and Mary Quarterly, XX [1965], pp. 457-470). Miss Catherine Anne Porter is currently at work on a biography which may shed light on Mather's character, but is more likely to print its worst features even more deeply on the popular mind (vide D. Levin, "The Hazing of Cotton Mather," New England Quarterly, XXXVI [1963], p. 152, and Miss Porter's "Affectation of Praehiminincies," Accent, II [1942], pp. 131-2).

[2] David Levin, Ed., What Happened in Salem? (New York, 1960), Introduction; "The Hazing of Cotton Mather," New England Quarterly, XXXVI (1963); Ed., Bonifacius (New Haven, 1966).

[3] "Cotton Mather and the Catholic Spirit" (Unpublished doctoral thesis, Stanford University, 1967). This thesis is not currently available for research; my generalization is based on personal correspondence (July 27, 1965, and October 9, 1965).

My purpose in this lengthy review of the literature on Mather is not to prepare a case for him as a great and good man, although such a study inevitably demythologizes some of the worst popular and scholarly prejudices against him. It is true that much of this survey has involved value judgments -- and not even the most sober scholar has been able to resist making these, when it comes to Mather -- but I have simply sought to indicate the scope of the disagreement on Mather, the loose ends which still remain to be tied up in a coherent interpretation of him, and the sources of some of the conceptual blind alleys which can mislead the searcher for the real Mather. I find many of the same faults in Mather that are listed in the worst of his critics, but I do find him to be a coherent personality when understood in the context of the Puritan synthesis of Christian experience, and I find him to be a figure of major importance. "When a Boston preacher who died almost two hundred years ago can still divide our local republic of letters into hostile camps at a moment's notice," Kittredge says, "the presumption is that he amounted to something."[1] I suspect that the main difficulty men have had in grasping Mather is rather similar to that which has hampered the attainment of a unified scholarly view of such figures as Calvin and Edwards. Like these men, Mather strongly epitomizes a sharply defined theological position, a position which makes some men wince and others rejoice. Like them, also, he cannot be interpreted as an isolated, freakish instance of religious eccentricity; he must be understood as a member of a long and rather ample tradition of Christian thought and experience.

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[1] Benz, "Pietist and Puritan Sources of Early World Missions," Church History, XX (1951), 28-55.

[2] Kuno Francke, "Cotton Mather and August Hermann Francke," Harvard Studies and Notes in Philosophy and Literature, V (1896), pp. 57-67; "Further Documents Concerning Cotton Mather and August Hermann Francke," America Germanica, I (1897), 31-66; "The Beginning of Cotton Mather's Correspondence with August Hermann Francke," Philosophical Quarterly, V (1926), 193-5.

I do not mean to suggest that Mather is a star of the same order. He is better understood as the lesser member of a triad including two other men whom he loved and deeply respected, Richard Baxter and August Hermann Francke. Like them, he represents not the tired end of an outworn intellectual fashion, but a new mutation in an old tradition within Christendom, a line which was centered on the development of Christian experience in the believing community. That mutation was by no means a sterile product fated to perish because it could not adapt to the Enlightenment, or to disappear because it adapted too well. The thesis to be explored in what follows is that Mather's root concerns involve the seeds of the most vigorous strains of evangelical Christianity which were to experience an efflorescence of growth during the next two centuries.

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[1] G. L. Kittredge, "Cotton Mather's Election into the Royal Society," Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, XIV (1911), 81-114.

2. Mather's Historical Context: New England's 'Spiritual Decline, 1652-1734

Most Nineteenth Century studies picture the Mathers against the background of the crumbling New England theocracy, fighting to maintain clerical power. It has gradually become clear to historians that the clergy's main concern in the late Seventeenth Century became, not the preservation of the theocracy, but the maintenance of orthodoxy within the church, the cure of what was considered decadence in the society, and the recovery of a lost *elan vital* which the later Puritans associated with the founders. Perry Miller aptly set his own study of the period in which the Mathers flourished within a framework which the late Puritans themselves would have considered the most relevant and important: the spiritual decline of the second and third generations in New England. I shall adopt the same setting in orienting this study of Mather, proceeding from a different perspective and arriving at somewhat different conclusions.

From the middle of the seventeenth-century onward, the New England ministers began to produce those piercing laments over decline, and thunderings against sin, which Miller calls 'Jeremiads.' As the decades passed, they became increasingly convinced that their society was sick, that it had degenerated from the spiritual power and moral integrity of the first generation of Puritans in America. Just how accurate they were in this diagnosis has been questioned. Writing in the 1760's, Thomas Hutchinson remarks that "We have no evidence of extraordinary degeneracy";[1] and sixty years later Henry Ware was surprised and rather gratified to discover that the Puritan fathers found their time no better than the clergy found the Nineteenth Century.[2] It is tempting to assume that the Jeremiads were the result of idealizing the golden age of the founders, and an expression of cultural misionism, resistance to the normal changes involved in growth from colony to province.

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[1] Thomas Hutchinson, *The History of Massachusetts* (Boston, 1764).

[2] Ware, *Two Discourses* . . . (Boston, 1821), pp. 10-11.

The spiritual decline was the dominant problem with which Mather grappled throughout his life and ministry. If the imagined decline is reducible to nostalgia or cultural shock among the Puritans, then his efforts were Quixotic, or worse. But it can be shown that along with the decline that was only apparent, there was a decline that was real: partly because the Puritans in the mother-country experienced something similar, but also because a survey of the literature of the period -- and especially the Election Sermons, those yearly bulletins on the spiritual health of Massachusetts -- supports this diagnosis

We have no evidence of the appearance of a Jeremiad in New England before 1652. The fast days celebrated in the colony's early years were rarely occasioned by sin; they were usually held in response to some untoward providence, such as bad weather, a plague, or an eclipse.[1] There was as yet no consciousness of the presence of any continuing force of decline in New England. There were, however, straws in the wind which are significant in the light of the later Jeremiads. The compulsory church attendance law passed in 1635 reflects the growing dichotomy in the population of the Bay Colony.[2] By 1643, there were 15,000 inhabitants in Massachusetts, about 1200 of these in Boston; but only 1708 of them were citizens, and although this is not a precise indication of church membership, it points to a lessening proportion of church members in the society.[3]

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[1] Perry Miller, "Declension in a Bible Commonwealth," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, LI (1941), 37-94.

[2] H. W. Schneider, The Puritan Mind (New York, 1930), p. 75.

[3] W. W. Sweet, Religion in Colonial America (New York, 1942), p. 102; Carl Bridenbaugh, Cities in the Wilderness (New York, 1938), p. 143.

In 1645 Richard Mather was openly in favor of adopting measures similar to the Half-way Covenant finally agreed upon by the Synod of 1662, and his views were a prime topic of discussion at the Cambridge Synod of 1646.[1] There were also occasional outbreaks of flagrant sin: cheating in business,[2] some mild rioting by members of the second generation at Harvard College in 1637, and house robbery by two ministers' sons in 1644.[3] In 1647, Nathanael Ward complained at length of the extravagance of women's fashions both abroad and in New England.[4] These are minor evidences of the change taking place in the community of Boston. By the mid-century mark it had made the transition from its original medieval village form to a primitive metropolitan economy; and after 1640, when trade with the West Indies supplanted the normal commerce with England, suspended by the Civil War, Boston became a commercial crossroads, and visible sin was on the increase among the lower classes. Among the more wealthy, affluence began to bring a different kind of iniquity: already in the 1630's, the sumptuary laws were becoming impossible to enforce because the elders' wives were dressing in court style; and by 1639 these had been amended so that they only admonished men not to dress above their class.[5] But the sermons of the period do not deal at length with these outward expressions of sin, but concentrate on the unmasking of outwardly virtuous hypocrisy, and on the correction of such inner problems as inattention in church, insensibility to spiritual reality, and heaviness and earthboundness of spirit. This could have been clerical scrupulosity; or it could have been the first sign of a disease which would ultimately break out with more spectacular effects among the godly in Boston.[1]

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[1] W. Walker, _A History of the Congregational Churches in the United States_ (New York, 1894), p. 171.

[2] Miller, "Declension in a Bible Commonwealth," _Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society_, VI (1941), 63.

[3] S. E. Morison, _Builders of the Bay Colony_ (Boston, 1930), p. 207.

[4] _Ibid._, p. 239.

[5] C. Bridenbaugh, _Cities in the Wilderness_ (New York, 1938), pp. 30, 69, 97.

During the two decades following the mid-century mark, the first generation was passing from the scene in New England, including the most respected leaders among the founders; and it is in this period that public lamentation for national sins begins and waxes.[2] Perry Miller identifies the beginning of the consciousness of decline as the year 1652, in which the fast proclamation does not emphasize providential evil as the cause of humiliation, but rather "the worldly-mindedness, oppression, and hard-heartedness feard to be amongst us."[3] In his farewell to the church in Dorchester in 1657, Richard Mather scores the proneness of the rising generation to adultery, fornication, lasciviousness, drunkenness, profanity, swearing, and scoffing at godliness.[4] By 1659 the college boys had grown sufficiently boisterous so that the town watch was authorized to keep order in Harvard Yard.[5] While alcoholic intemperance had not been a problem before the midcentury, after this point, as the population climbed from 2000 in 1650 to 3000 in 1660, there was both a proliferation of taverns and a rise in the incidence of drunkenness.[1] By 1663, the sea-trade had brought in "strange women" to whom the lower classes resorted.[2] But it was the failure of heart-religion among the godly that was still the main concern of the ministry. In 1662 Michael Wigglesworth responded to the Great Drought with the production of his great verse Jeremiad, in which he initiated the pattern of comparing the glory of the past generation with the depravity of the present:

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[1] Babette May Levy, Preaching in the First Half Century of New England History (Hartford, 1945), pp. 41-3.

[2] H. S. Smith, R. T. Handy, and L. A. Loetscher, American Christianity, I (New York, 1960), 197.

[3] Perry Miller, "Declension in a Bible Commonwealth," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, LI (1941), 49.

[4] Levy, op. cit., p. 44.

[5] Wendell, Cotton Mather (New York, 1891), p. 36.

> How is it that I find
> In stead of holiness Carnality,
> In stead of heavenly frames an Earthly mind,
> For burning Zeal luke-warm Indifferency,
> For flaming love, key-cold Dead-heartedness,
> For temperance (in meat, and drinks, & cloaths) excess?[3]

Besides these faults of interior spirituality, Wigglesworth denounced such sins as pride, luxury, debate, deceit, contention, strife, false-dealing, covetousness, hypocrisy, and sloth. William Stoughton, in an election sermon preached in 1668, complains of the baser metal of the rising generation: "The First Generation have been ripen'd time after time, & the most of them gather'd in as Shocks of Corn in their Season; But we that rise up to tread out the Footsteps of them that are gone before us, Alas! what are we? It is a sad Name, to be stiled children that are Corrupters." The "sad metamorphosis" of the new generation from the purity of the founders has produced a society that is "sermon-proof & Ordinance-proof," always "itching after new things & ways."[4]

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[1] Bridenbaugh, Cities in the Wilderness (New York, 1938), pp. 77, 143.

[2] Ibid., p. 72

[3] Michael Wigglesworth, "God's Controversy with New England," in The Puritans, ed. by P. Miller and T. H. Johnson (New York, 1938), pp. 612-13.

[4] W. Stoughton, New England's True Interest (Boston, 1668), p. 11.

This last phrase points to one underlying cause of uneasiness in New England's leadership in the 1650's and 1660's. The doctrinal unity of the religious society, in some respects its main pillar, was being shaken. Until 1656 no alien sect had managed to establish itself in the Bay, Plymouth, New Haven or Connecticut colonies; but in that year there appeared the threat of a Quaker invasion which persisted into the next decade. While Miss Levy is not quite correct in saying that the sin most detested by the Puritan leaders of this period was tolerance, it is certain that they were deeply disturbed by the response of their people to religious enthusiasm, and to less extreme errors of doctrine or polity. There are allusions to this matter in most of the sermons of the 1660's.[1]

The next decade was shaken by a number of extraordinarily disastrous 'providences': King Philip's War, from 1673-6; fires in the North Church in 1676 and 1679; and a number of smallpox attacks.[2] These ominous signs combined with increasing evidences of change in New England society to make the darker-toned Jeremiad dominant during the 70's.[3] Doctrinal indifference is still a main concern in the sermons of these years, aggravated through the threat posed by a new, more aggressive Anglican missions policy beginning in 1675; Lindsay Swift claims that all the sermons of this period bear in some manner on religious toleration.[4] The younger Thomas Shepard, in 1672, states that the magistrate must bear the sword against heresy, and he is powerfully echoed by Samuel Torrey two years later.

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[1] Levy, op. cit., p. 54.

[2] W. W. Sweet, Religion in Colonial America (New York, 1942), p. 102.

[3] Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), p. 30.

[4] L. Swift, "The Massachusetts Election Sermons," Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, I (1892-4), 401.

With much flourishing of the Old Testament, Torrey makes the planting of New England an exact analogue to the settlement of Israel in Canaan. God showed the fathers "the pattern of the house," the church order and form of worship alone agreable to Him, just as He did to Israel at Sinai; and any departure from this into "will-worship" is declension into punishable depravity. Hence the magistrate must resolutely act against transgressions of the first table of the Law along with those of the second. But even the fire-breathing Torrey was concerned about dissension among orthodox Congregationalists, a by-product of this theocratic attitude; and William Hubbard's election sermon of 1676 breathes quite a different spirit in its emphasis on charitable tolerance as the solution for New England's schismatic tendencies.[1]

During the 1670's there is increasing evidence of decadence in the moral fabric of society. The first house of prostitution in Boston appeared in 1772.[2] Increase Mather, who began his public ministry in the North Church in 1664, notes the effect of the increasing commercial expansion in the Bay area: land had become the idol of men's hearts.[3] Many of the sermons of the period note an increase in oppression and dishonesty among the merchant class, and there are occasionally also excessive demands on the part of labor.[4] Urian Oakes complains of a deficiency of public spirit and a neglect of works of public charity, and states that social pride is on the increase both amont the upper and lower classes. The latter aped their superiors by wearing extravagant fashions they could ill afford, and so thrust themselves out of their proper station in society, which seemed a clear sign of decay in a community in which the English social structure was accepted as a part of orthodoxy.[1]

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[1] Thomas Shepard, Eye-Salve (Boston, 1672), p. 17; Samuel Torrey, An Exhortation unto Reformation (Cambridge, Mass., 1674), pp. 18-20, 27-8.

[2] Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), p. 36.

[3] Ibid., p. 37.

[4] Perry Miller, "Declension in a Bible Commonwealth," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, LI (1941), 64.

Religious indifference and boredom at lectures and in church was not a new phenomenon in New England, but in the 1670's something new appears: anticlericalism. Urian Oakes observes in 1673 the existence of a "secret indispositon to ministers," and again, in 1674, "a great Disaffection to ministers of Christ."[2] But this direct frontal attack on the establishment is not the main worry of the ministers. They are still centrally concerned over the secret decline in interior spirituality. "The great Apostacy of New England is in respect of the Spirits of men, and general decay as to the power of godliness," says Torrey; and Oakes complains of the loss of fervency, love, heavenly mindedness, watching over hearts and tongues, "That practical piety & power of godliness, when the kingdom of heaven suffer's violence, & Religion was the great business of men . . ."[3] Fear of God and hatred of sin are vanishing, he says, nor are there many left who engage in the old ways of reading, meditation, and wrestling with God. Opinions on the main root of the declension vary slightly. Samuel Danforth mentions two central sins: unbelief and inordinate wordly affection.[4] William Hubbard argues for pride, in orthodox Augustinian fashion.[5] But nearly all the ministers refer in one way or another to the covetous immersion in Boston's prosperity among their people. Hubbard accepts King Philip's War as a necessary purgative: "God is knocking the hands of New England people off from the world, and from new Plantations, till they get them new hearts."[1]

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[1] Urian Oakes, *New England Pleaded With* (Cambridge, Mass., 1673), p.34.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 32.

[3] Levy, *op*. *cit*~~., p.~~ 46.

[4] Samuel Danforth, *A Brief Recognition* . . . (Boston, 1670).

[5] William Hubbard, *The Happiness of a People* (Boston, 1676), p. 54.

In one sense the problem was not so much one of spiritual decline as one of failure in spiritual reproduction. The Puritans felt that the root cause of much of the difficulty was simply the unregeneracy in the younger generation, which in its unconverted state was infecting whole churches with its sins. A new generation had arisen which "knew not the Lord," as Torrey says, alluding to the cyclical pattern of decline and revival in the book of Judges; and a dispensation of converting grace was needed for these.[2] But on the other hand, there must be spiritual impotence in the older generation to account for this failure to transmit the faith to the rising youth, a loss of "first love," and absence of "the power of godliness."[3] Torrey recommends a renewing of the public covenant as the main step toward recovery from this condition, but admits that more than an outward form is needed: "We need then a new heart . . . This is the reason that we do not reform: that we cannot reform."[4] And so we find Samuel Hooker, as early as 1677, stating the need for a revival of religion, and calling for "continual waiting for the effusions of the Spirit" as the only effective course left to New England.[5]

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[1] Ibid., p. 59.

2 Samuel Torrey, An Exhortation unto Reformation (Cambridge, Mass., 1674), pp. 10, 17, 24.

[3] Ibid., p. 10; Urian Oakes, New England Pleaded With (Cambridge, Mass., 1673), p. 27.

[4] Torrey, op. cit., p. 12.

[5] Ibid., pp. 8, 0.

By 1679 the process of decline was judged to be sufficiently threatening to warrant the calling of a general synod to probe its causes and possible cure. The Reforming Synod, in which Increase Mather was an important participant, is significant not only for the results of its analysis, many of which were already anticipated in the sermons of the preceding years, but for its form, which is that of a commentary on the Decalogue, putting the church of Christ in New England in the same covenant status as Israel at Sinai. In its diagnosis of New England's ills the Synod adds little that is radically new, though it does seem to reflect a more advanced stage of the illness. The principle causes for decline are still decay of the power of godliness, heart apostasy, neglect of secret communion with God, and pride manifested in unseemly apparel among the poor. Quakers and Anabaptists have been allowed to "set up altars beside the lord's." There is irreverence, Sabbath-breaking, and the decay of family worship and nurture. The Result observes that "Most of the evils which abound among us issue from this want of family government." There are hatred and contention, intemperance, health-drinking, debauching the Indians, tavern-hunting, mixed dancing, gambling, light company. There is an inordinate lust for land, the settling of plantations without regard to the ministry to them, unfair trading, unreasonable demands from labor, and 'straight-handedness' toward public and pious concerns. The condition of decline is widespread and resists correction; many are involved in these sins; those who would reform them are abused and slandered, and punishment is consequently lax.[1]

The Synod suggests several solutions for this situation. First there must be action on the part of the leadership: exemplary holiness, enforcement of the support of the ministry by the civil magistrate, and the passage of laws to extirpate heresy and restrain schism, and to moderate the plague of taverns. There is to be sound discipline in the churches: reproof of scandal, and admission of new members only on public profession of faith and experience. There must be encouragement of Harvard as a "school of divine learning." Since this is a new generation, there must be re-affirmation of faith in the Platform of Discipline and the putting away of false modes of serving God, and there must be days set apart for the solemn renewal of the covenant, on the basis of "things indisputable," with the explicit naming of sins in confession. The tone of these recommendations is, of course, entirely legal, and stepped in Old Testament language and precepts. But again there is just a hint at the end of the domument on the need to wait upon God for spiritual awakening, an exhortation to pray for heart-renovation through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. As complete and literal biblicists, the ministers found no inconsistency in sewing patches from the New Testament on cloth which was largely from the Old. There was a brief period of reformation revival following the Synod,[1] but as Perry Miller observes, subsequent Jeremiads never subtracted any sins from this report, but simply intensified its coloration or added new problems, so that the Reforming Synod of 1879 became an immovable foundation for future lament.[2]

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[1] "The Result of the Synod of 1679," in The Results of Three Synods (Boston, 1725), passim.

The 1880's brought a considerable shaking of New England's foundations, the changing of the charter in 1684, sweeping away the machinery of Puritanism's legal establishment. The result was a society in which Anglicanism could expand freely -- King's Chapel was established just two years later in Boston -- and in which a number of the normal English customs could also take deeper root.[1] After two dancing masters had tried to open shop in Boston and been suppressed, in 1672 and 1681, a third got a firmer foothold with the new charter; and by 1685 there were mixed dances on the Lecture Days.[2] Governor Andros also permitted dueling, and there was an increase in drinking and general bawdiness augmented by the appearance of that detestable pastime, cock-fighting.[3] In 1685 the twenty-two-year-old Cotton Mather was voicing private fears lest the country be overrun by infidels of one sort or another;[4] and in the same year his father loosed a broadside intended to crush such moral Anglicisms as stage plays, "promiscuous dancing," healthing, gambling, New Year's gifts, and Christmas.[5]

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[1] H. S. Smith, R. T. Handy, and L. A. Loetscher, American Christianity, I (New York, 1960), 45.

[2] Perry Miller, "Declension in a Bible Commonwealth," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, LI (1941), 53.

Judging only from the Mathers' analysis, we might assume that much of the social depravity reported during this period was in the eye of the Puritan beholder rather than in the situation. It is fortunate that as a check against the ministers' evaluation of their culture we have the contemporary report of a visiting Anglican layman, John Dunton. Dunton was sympathetic to American Puritanism, and profoundly admired the Massachusetts clergy, but cannot be accused of being a zealous legalist. Writing in 1686 after several cordial conferences with the Mathers and some extensive exploration of his own in Boston, he gave a candid account which resonates with the Jeremiad tone:

> The first English that came over hither . . . were certainly the most

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[1] W. Walker, *A History of the Congregational Churches* (New York, 1894), p. 1 .

[2] B. Wendell, *Cotton Mather* (New York, 1891), p. 44; C. Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness* (New York, 1938), p. 116.

[3] Increase Mather, *Testimony Against Prophane Customs* (Charlottesville, Va., 1953), p. 5.

[4] Cotton Mather, *Diary* (New York, 1957), I (February, 1684).

[5] Increase Mather, *op*. *cit*., *passim*.

> Pious and Religious Men in the World, Men that had experienced the Power of Divine Grace upon their own Souls, and were the lively Patterns of Primitive Zeal and Integrity; and wou'd have converted all the World, if they cou'd; especially their own Posterity. But alas! this blessed Wind of the Spirit blows where it listeth, Many of them were converted and made truly Gracious, and these walk to this Day in the steps of their Pious Fore-fathers: But there are others of them, who never knew the Power of Converting Grace, who yet retain a form of Godliness, and make a strict Profession of the out-side of Religion, tho' they never knew what the Power of Godliness was; and these are the most Profligate and debaunched Wretches in the World; their Profession of Religion teaching them only how to sin . . . more refinedly . . . You will soon know how to discern what is spoken of these Hypocrites, from what belongs to the Truly Religious, of which there are many, tho' the others are the far greater Number.[1]

Dunton then goes on to give a lively picture of the "far greater Number:"

> There are great censors of other men's manners, but extreamly careless of their own . . . Nothing keeps 'em friends, but only the fear of exposing one another's knavery. As for the Rabble, their Religion lies in cheating all they deal with. When you are dealing with 'em, you must look upon 'em as at cross purposes, and read 'em like Hebrew backward; for they seldom speak and mean the same thing, but like Water-men, Look one Way, and Row another . . . I had not given you the Trouble of so large an Account of the maners of the Bostonians, nor rak'd in such a Dunghil of Filth, but that this sort of People are so apt to say, Stand off, for I am holier than Thou.[2]

But the writer is not utterly soured on Boston:

> Amongst all this Dross, there runs here and there a vein of pure Gold: and though the Generality are what I have describ'd 'em, yet is there as sincere a Pious and truly Religious People among them, as is any where in the Whole World to be found.[3]

Dunton was particularly impressed by the piety and the immense learning of the young Cotton Mather.

The Jeremiads of the 1680's continue uniformly in the pattern established in the previous decade and codified in the Reforming Synod. Most of these might be classified as 'theocratic Jeremiads,' since they assume that New England is a covenant nation with a Congregational establishment, and that the toleration of dissent is not a virtue but a sin which will provoke God to send destructive judgments. Somewhere during this period, however, certain New England leaders began to shift away from theocratic presuppositions, among them the Mathers. By 1690, even before toleration was legally enforced, most Christian sects were able to conduct worship freely in Boston.[1] The new charter which Increase Mather negotiated in London in 1691 still left Puritanism disestablished. But the Jeremiads of the early years of this decade are still quite lurid in their coloration, even if they are less theocratic, for the witchcraft crisis was interpreted as the darkest of warning providences.[2] And while the Jeremiads no longer insist on intolerance toward dissenting forms of religion, they do continue to urge strongly the duty of the magistrate to enforce both tables of the law -- to encourage and favor Christian worship in general, and to legislate and prosecute against moral disorders in society.[3] But there are some interesting allusions and alterations in tone, as the decade wears on, which point to a stirring of new responses to New England's problems. Jeremiah Shepard in 1694 mention that critics are appearing, and Samuel Torrey in 1695, who accuse the authors of the Jeremiads of Old Testament thinking in New Testament times.[4] But the greatest indications of change are in the later sermons of the decade, which reflect a singular brightening of the outlook of the Mather party, even under attack. Cotton Mather's Things for a Distressed People, in 1696, begins with the customary list of the colony's ailments, but then offers a series of encouraging evidences of God's continuing presence in New England, and closes on this note.[1] Nicholas Noyes' outlook on New England's destiny, in 1698, is sober but remarkably hopeful, looking forward to a "plentiful effusion of the Holy Spirit," and to the conversion of the Indians and other works of spiritual renovation.[2] Cotton Mather's Pillar of Gratitude, in 1700, is again positive in tone.[3]

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[1] John Dunton, Letters from New England (Boston, 1867), p. 74.

[2] *Ibid*.

[3] *Ibid*.

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[1] C. Bridenbaugh, Cities in the Wilderness (New York, 1938), p. 102.

[2] P. Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), pp. 183-5.

[3] Ibid., p. 176; cf. Nicholas Noyes, New England's Duty . . . (Boston, 1698), p. 54.

[4] S. Willard, Reformation the Duty of an Afflicted People (Boston, 1694), p. 10.

Perry Miller has suggested that the absence of the Jeremiad tone in sermons like these was a careful piece of public relations, the Mathers having realized that New England's self-flagellation was being taken at face value in London and might darken the colony's image, and so interfere with the diplomatic role Increase hoped to reassume. But the Puritan conscience being the sensitive instrument it undoubtedly was, the ministers would not have manufactured a bright side of things of which they could see no trace. And within Cotton Mather's own writings we shall find a more convincing explanation than Miller's. Mather's sensitivity to cultural decline had not grown dull; for the rest of his life, he had an increasingly acute awareness of spiritual declension as a condition in the whole of Protestantism, not simply in New England. But in the 1690's he had begun to expect an imminent outpouring of the Holy Spirit which would transform the church and society, and he was shifting away from theocratic remedies to the decline toward a new emphasis on prayerful waiting for the effusion of the Spirit. The same emphasis is present in Noyes' sermon of 1698, and even Increase Mather's Peril of the Times Displayed (1700) found evidence of revival in 1700 in the awakening spiritual interest of young people in London.[4] This developing focus on revival as the answer to spiritual decline -- as opposed to reformation, defined in the legal and covantal terms of the Old Testament - suggests that once the nerve of theocratic control was cut in New England, the ministers suddenly found themselves free to shift from the strategy of Sinai to that of Pentecost. Like Lyman Beecher living through the disestablishment of Connecticut, some may have seen the passing of the theocracy as a stroke at the vitals of Christendom; but like Beecher, many of them later found that the closing up of one avenue of control opened up the possibility of a new and superior strategy: contending for the faith simply through the use of 'gospel weapons.'

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[1] Cotton Mather, Things for a Distressed People (Boston, 1696), passim.

[2] Nicholas Noyes, New England's Duty and Interest . . . (Boston, 1698), p. 54.

[3] Cotton Mather, A Pillar of Gratitude (Boston, 1700), passim.

[4] Increase Mather, The Peril of the Times Displayed (Boston, 1700), pp. 6-9.

The next two decades of Bostonian experience, from 1700-1720, offered continuing cultural change which would have driven the second generation of New England ministers into uninterrupted spasms of the Jeremiad. By 1700 the population of the city had more than tripled from the midcentury mark to a high of 6700, and in 1720 this figure had nearly doubled again to 12,000. Accompanying this urban growth was a marked extension of the population into the outlying frontier, so that by 1720 less than a tenth of the population lived in the city where religious influence was strong. During this period only 20-25% of the population of Boston could have been church-going, for this was all the churches could hold. Gradually the bay city became the coin centre of the colonies and a primary nexus of marketing and distribution. A rise in every form of social vice ensued, particularly those springing from the marine trade. Boston's prostitutes had become famous by the 1690's, and somewhat later the Lecture Days began to be termed "Whore Fairs." Drunkenness was increasingly evident as the most socially destructive evil of the entire period and the tavern became the most flourishing institution of the period. During the years of the war between England and France, the colonies were forced into closer contact with the society of the home country, and the resulting osmosis of mores went against the Puritan grain. Governor Dudley's accession in 1702 opened the way to an unrestricted Anglicizing of Boston society. "Promiscuous dancing" in public became so common as to evade comment by 1713, and stage shows were permitted after 1712. Meanwhile the class structure of the city enlarged, with the gap between the rich and the poor widening, and making room for a growing middle class. Upper class consciousness, displayed in dress and non-Puritanical manners, increased among the wealthy establishment and in the churches. A portion of the clergy drifted easily into a close imitation of Anglican latitudinarianism, attracting that portion of the aristocracy which had not already defected to the Anglican church; and Harvard tutors openly recommended the High-Church authors of the English church as a cure to narrowness.[1]

Facing this degree of cultural change, the Mather party might have reacted with a continued series of Jeremiads, or they might have capitulated to the times and grown rational and respectable. Perry Miller's observation has been that they did both, so that the old Puritanism either adapted or died out gradually, for "this society had become a time-bomb . . . It was a parched land crying for deliverance from the hold of ideas that had served their purpose and died."[2] This analysis takes for granted that the period of 'decline' is an historical transition from a sacralized culture to a secularized, 'modern' situation, in which the old Puritanism became virtually extinct. But this is much too simple. The theocracy died, but much of the central core of Puritanism survived to generate the

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[1] Carl Bridenbaugh, Cities in the Wilderness (New York, 1938), pp. 72, 143, 179, 182, 226, 251, 253-7, 258-65, 277, 474.

[2] Perry Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), p. 484.

Great Awakening, and continued to make periodic, Phoenix-like reappearances in a series of revivals since then, most notably in the greatest century of the church's missionary expansion. There were not simply two options for the Boston ministers in the early 1700's, theocratic reaction or Enlightenment adaptation. There was a third option, which I shall characterize as progressive evangelicalism, which sought to preserve the essence of Puritan Calvinism while stripping away some of its excrescences; and Cotton Mather was the most vigorous spokesman for this option in Boston.

All three approaches are visible in the election sermons of 1700-1720. There are Jeremiads during this period, but far fewer than we should expect, and mostly in the first decade.[1] The second approach, the pre-Enlightenment stream, may perhaps be detected in Ebenezer Pemberton's sermon on the text, "Ye are Gods, but ye shall die like men," which puts most of its emphasis on the first clause;[2] and Benjamin Colman's The Religious Regards We Owe to Our Country so far avoids the Jeremiad pattern that it strikes of modern note of warmly complacent patriotism.[3] But it is really the voice of progressive evangelicalism which is heard most frequently during this period. This is sounded initially in Solomon Stoddard's election sermon of 1703, which seems at first to be a typical Jeremiad, but develops quite differently: it does not eulogize the fathers, and it treats New England's condition as a present problem to be solved by vigorous action.[1] Peter Thacher, in 1711,[2] and Benjamin Wadsworth, in 1716,[3] reiterated Stoddard's practical approach; and Jeremiah Shepard, in 1715, celebrated the grace of God toward sinful New England and the hope for future restoration in answer to prayer:

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[1] Increase Mather, Ichabod (Boston, 1702); John Norton, An Essay Tending to Promote Reformation (Boston, 1708); Grindall Rawson, The Necessity of a Speedy and Thorough Reformation (Boston, 1709); William Williams, A Plea for God (Boston, 1719).

[2] Ebenezer Pemberton, The Divine Original (Boston, 1710).

[3] Benjamin Colman, The Religious Regards . . . (Boston, 1718).

> God hath done all this for us, notwithstanding our many Sins and Provocations. We have been a sinful People. Oh the Lords sparing mercy in the midst of our Sins . . . How many times has he turn'd away his Anger? . . . We in this Wilderness can speak this Experimentally . . . Oh the many sweet returns of Prayer we have had! and God hath made His arm glorious for our relief.[4]

The revivalist note is more explicitly struck in Samuel Danforth's Exhortation . . . to Obtain a Visit of the God of Hosts (1714), which cautions that men can only be made willing to be reformed by the moving of God's spirit, and that New England must wait upon Him for "Revival & fresh springing up of religion . . . that Remarkable breathing of the Spirit in the Day of a Merciful Visit."[5]

It is true that there is a reversion to the Jeremiad in the fifteen years just prior to the Great Awakening, but this is natural considering the extraordinary conjuction of disasters occurring during this period. There were recurrent Indian wars on the expanding frontier, and smallpox plagues in 1721 and 1729. Even more alarming to the ministers was the increasing outbreak of anticlerical and skeptical sentiment, made public in the New England Courant.[1] These factors combined to resuscitate for a while the old-style Jeremiad, with its predictions of black doom.[2] A Ministers' Convention in 1725 wrote by the pen of Cotton Mather to request the right to hold a second Reforming Synod, to inquire into the question, Why are we judged? -- but the request was denied.[3] The ministers went to prayer for revival, which seemed to come briefly.[4] Then in 1727 came the great earthquake, sweeping over a five-hundred mile radius in repeated shocks during the course of a whole week, engendering many Jeremiads and a temporary seriousness among the people. The 1730's again found the ministers preaching in a minor key, but continuing to pray for the revival which in a few years would delight men like the Princes and Josua Gee, Cotton Mather's surviving colleagues and spiritual successors.[5]

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[1] Solomon Stoddard, The Way for a People to Live Long in the Land (Boston, 1703). Nearly all historians have placed Stoddard and Mather in opposing camps because of their strife over converting ordinances. They were both progressives, however, but with differing strategies.

[2] Peter Thacher, The Alsufficient Physician . . . (Boston, 1711)

[3] Benjamin Wadsworth, Rulers Feeding and Guiding . . . (Boston, 1716).

[4] Jeremiah Shepard, God's Conduct of His Church with His Glorious Arm (Boston, 1715), pp. 27-8.

[5] Samuel Danforth, An Exhortation to All . . . to Obtain a Visit of the God of Hosts (Boston, 1714).

Cotton Mather agreed with most of the Boston ministry that New England was passing through a period of spiritual declension, and he spent most of his lifetime trying to make theological and practical adjustments in the Puritan heritage so that he could help cure that decline.

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[1] H. B. Parker, "New England in the Seventeen-Thirties," The New England Quarterly, III (1930), 412-13.

[2] Jeremiads of the period (excluding the numerous sermons on the earthquake of 1727) include Increase Mather's The Testimony Finished (Boston, 1722); Joseph Sewall's Rulers Must Be Just (Boston, 1724); Thomas Foxcroft's God's Face Set Against an Incorrigible People (Boston, 1724); Ebenezer Thayer's Jerusalem Instructed and Warned (Boston, 1725); Cotton Mather's Suspiria Vinctorum (Boston, 1727); Robert Breck's The Only Method . . . (Boston, 1728); Jeremiah Wise' Rulers the Ministers of God (Boston, 1729); and Henry Flynt's Appeal to the Consciences of a Degenerate People (Boston, 1729).

[3] W. Walker, A History of the Congregational Churches (New York, 1894), p. 212.

[4] H. B. Parker, op. cit., p. 416.

[5] Thomas Prince, Jr., An Account of the Revival . . . (Boston, 1823), p. 6. Thomas Prince, Jr., was the chronicler of the awakening in Boston; and Joshua Gee, Mather's assistant and hand-picked successor in his pulpit, was its main leader and energizer.

But were the ministers right in their diagnosis? We have touched upon many symptoms that seem to show that the decline was only apparent. Many have argued that the second and third generations in New England had an exaggerated regard for the founders, and Miss Levy suggests that they were prone to this because of their doctrine of the Fall.[1] But although the Puritans did hold to a decay-of-nature theory in this sense, that each generation must inevitably decay apart from the miracle of a new inbreathing of the Spirit, their philosophy of history did encourage them to hope and pray for this work of God, and gave them criteria to recognize it when it came. Another obvious explanation for the sense of decline is simply the presence of cultural change: "As the village grew it merely took on the normal aspects of any urban community."[2] There is a good deal of truth in this. The ministers had a propensity to regard New England as a national monastery, which prevented them from rejoicing when immigration changed the colony from a retreat-ground into a mission field. Samuel Danforth complains to God,

> Thou hast reserved to Thy Self but a Little Spot of Ground on Earth to be Thy Garden Inclosed; and al the Rest of the World are suffered to go on in their Own Ways to Thy Dishonour; and wilt Thou not stand by those that Stand for Thee? . . . Shall Satan prevail and leave Christ no Garden-Spot on Earth to Walk in? For Thy Name Sake, Let it not be so![3]

But it is still obvious that the main worry of the ministers was not the depravity of the neighborhood but the members of their own congregations. Immigration was not especially heavy during the late seventeenth century, the age of the classic Jeremiads; rather than the church being smothered by an influx of worldly citizens, we get the impression that it was easily infected with the spiritual weaknesses of a minority of newcomers. It is true, as Miller says, that the commercial growth of the Bay Colony, which had populated Boston by 1670 with some thirty thousand merchants worth between ten and thirty thousand pounds, brought an irritating economic pressure in the direction of toleration, and produced a social mobility which played hob with the old hierarchical class structure, as it glutted and dampened the spiritual appetites of Bostonians with material prosperity.[1] But at least the later generation of ministers was objective enough to distinguish corruption from its occasions in these matters: they did not attack prosperity, but the vacuum in the men's hearts which filled itself with goods instead of the divine presence. Miller argues that Puritanism inevitably generated its own pathology, since it drove men into prosperity and also held out to them the ideal of an ascetic life, so that "the right thing was also the wrong thing," and neurotic introspection was bound to result.[2] But affluent Congregationalists were more liable to lapse into a comfortable complacency than a neurosis, and the ministers did not spend much time telling them to work harder -- they had to lean as hard as they could against their natural acquisitiveness just to get them to pray occasionally. The growth of an unchurched frontier was certainly a disturbing factor, but the spiritual disinterest of the settlers and the apathy of the city churches in providing missions to them were in obvious contrast to the pilgrim temper of the founders, who had managed to combine piety with pioneering.

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[1] Levy, op. cit., p. 55.

[2] C. Bridenbaugh, Cities in the Wilderness (New York, 1938), p. 72.

[3] Samuel Danforth, An Exhortation to All (Boston, 1714), p. 32.

The ministers did complain in the Jeremiads about matters which strike us as peripheral -- the 'normalization' of the national monastery; changes in social habits which we judge to be adiaphora, but which had come to be shibboleths in the Puritan/High Church warfare; divergence from Congregational polity and practice; and many other variations from the status quo. And certainly there was enough cultural change in Boston's first century to unnerve anyone who identified the standing order with optimum spirituality. But the ministers' main concern was for the audience to whom they spoke directly, not for the cultural environment which was being normalized. They sensed a broadening dulness among their congregations, a distracted inattentiveness which made it difficult to raise the people's hearts to the things of God. This is the main burden of the Jeremiads from beginning to end: the presence of a form of religion, but the denial of 'the power of godliness.' For the Puritan, a defect in communion with God was the pivotal point of the decline; it was, in Emily Dickinson's phrase, "the missing All." On the eve of the Awakening in New England, in 1733, Samuel Wigglesworth's Essay for Reviving Religion articulates the concern which remained central for the Mathers and the Puritan ministers during the decline: "Let us not labour to build up a Shell, to form a meer Carcase of Godliness, by furnishing our Auditors with Moral Virtues, only, void of Internal Vital Principles: but Travail in Birth with them until Christ be formed in them . . ."[1] No cultural change or doctrinal shift within Puritanism can quite explain why, a year later in Northampton, young people and adults suddenly began to behave as the ministers felt they should, and were lifted from their preoccupation with earthly cares and delights to converse in joy and desperation about the realities of the invisible world; nor can it explain why this phenomenon appeared almost spontaneously in so many places throughout the English-speaking world. But for the Puritan ministers, it was what they had been praying for: it was the return of the power of godliness.

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[1] Perry Miller, "Declension in a Bible Community," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, LI (1941), 70, 80, 87.

[2] Perry Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (New 1953), p. 28.

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[1] Samuel Wigglesworth, An Essay for the Reviving of Religion (Boston, 1733), p. 21.

Set against this background, Cotton Mather appears neither as a Puritan reactionary nor as an Enlightenment convert. He is a transistional figure in the passage from the old theocratic Puritanism to the new revivalism of the Awakening. He did his best either to eliminate or to counterbalance certain elements within the old Puritanism which were short-circuiting the Christianity of the period of decline, chief among them the theocratic strategy and the theory of conversion. He was too conservative to give up entirely certain other elements in the Puritan system which today we can see were irritating or deadening factors, such as legalism about indifferent matters, and the restricted theology of culture whose narrowness the Enlightenment rightly scored. But even if his progressivism is, as a recent writer says, a curious sort of "backing into modernity,"[1] he is a progressive; and the next two centuries of Protestant evangelicalism are present in germinal form in his life and thought.

3. A Brief Review of Mather's Life and Work

> Under this stone lies Richard Mather,
> Who had a son greater than his father,
> And eke a grandson greater than either.[2]

Whether or not this bit of doggerel is correct, there is no question that it sums up the most important dynasty in colonial New England history. Richard Mather (1596-1669), the founder, came to Boston in 1635, and carried out a careful and studious ministry in the church at Dorchester until his death. He was the principal developer of the Congregational polity in New England, and the Cambridge Platform, which is cast mainly in the language of his draught, shows him to have been an original and articulate thinker.[1] His son Increase (1639-1723) was converted to serious Christianity in 1654, two years before his graduation from Harvard College. Urged toward sholarly eminence by the example of his father and the encouragement of his mother, he obtained a Master of Arts at Trinity College in Dublin. After a year of ministry in England he was forced back to America by the Restoration, loyal to his father's Nonconformist principles; and in 1661 he began to alternate in preaching in Dorchester and at the new North Church in Boston, to which he was called permanently as teacher in 1664. In 1662 he married John Cotton's only daughter, thus uniting two of the main genetic streams of spiritual and intellectual leadership in the colony. The first offspring of this union, born on Feb. 12, 1663, was Cotton Mather (1663-1727).

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[1] David Hawke, The Colonial Experience (New York, 1966), p. 301.

[2] W. B. O. Peabody, Life of Cotton Mather (Boston, 1836), p. 163.

During Cotton's childhood his father's career was a constantly rising star in church and political circles in the Bay Colony. Increase accompanied Richard Mather to the Synod of 1662 as a second delegate from the Dorchester church, joining President Chauncy and John Davenport in opposing his father's advocacy of the Half-Way Covenant, and appearing in print for the first time in a preface to Davenport's protest against the result. In this instance Increase showed a strong vein of intellectual courage and independence, and also a conservative bent which is in contrast to the progressive temper of his father and his son Cotton; but in the fact that he had reversed his position by 1668 he displays that adaptibility under the pressure of practical necessity which characterized all three of the principal Mathers. In 1664 Increase was formally installed as teacher of the North Church. In 1667 he began a long list of publications with a treatise on the millenial awakening which would involve the conversion of the Jews.[1] In 1674 he was appointed by the General Court to the board of censorship which regulated the press in New England, and in the same year was made an Overseer of Harvard College. In the meantime he pursued a rigid course of study and devotional exercises which is significantly relected in his son's portrayal of the ideal Christian life, and accumulated the finest and most extensive library in the colonies, which started at nearly a thousand volumes in 1664 and to which he made constant additions over the years.[2]

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[1] W. Walker, "The Services of the Mathers in New England Religious Development," Papers of the American Society of Church History, V (1893), 62-7.

Growing up in such a household, the young Cotton Mather was in ideal surroundings for the nurture of learning and the implanting of ambition toward leadership. He readily took to the process of education, partly because his mind was exceptionally quick, and partly because his relationship to his father was close and affectionate. It is atypical -- but we dare not say abnormal -- for an eighteen year old to count among his chief blessings" . . . especially, the Life and Health of my dear Father, whom I may reckon among the richest of my Enjoyments."[3] As Barrett Wendell remarks, "Cotton Mather never observed any other law of God quite so faithfully as the Fifth Commandment,"[4] and this receptiveness to authority enabled him to drink in eagerly and rapidly the lessons of his father and the teachers at the Boston free school. Meanwhile his spiritual life developed with that precocity which seems to have been common among Puritan children, if we can accept the account he wrote for his son near the end of his life:

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[1] Increase Mather, The Mystery of Israel's Salvation (London, 1669).

[2] Kenneth B. Murdock, Increase Mather (Cambridge, Mass., 1926), pp. 86-124.

[3] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 20 (June, 1681).

[4] Wendell, Cotton Mather (New York, 1891), p. 28.

> I desire to bewayl unto the very *end* of my Life, the early Ebullitions of *Original Sin*, which appeared at the very Beginning of it. Indeed your Grandfather . . . would . . . comfort himself with an Opinion of my being *Sanctified by the Holy Spirit of God in my very infancy*. But he knew not how vile I was . . . However, there were *some good things* in my childhood . . . I began to *pray*, even when I began to speak. I learned myself to *write* before my going to school for it. I used *secret prayer*, not confining myself to *Forms* in it: and yet I composed *Forms of prayer* for my school-mates (I suppose when I was about seven or eight years old), and obliged them to *pray*. Before I could write *Sermons* in the public Assemblies I commonly *wrote* what I remembered when I came home. I rebuked my play mates for their wicked *words* and *ways*; and sometimes I suffered from them, the persecution of not only *Scoffs* but *Blows* also, for my Rebukes, when somebody told your Grandfather, I remember he seemed very *glad*, yea, almost *proud* of my Affronts, and I then wondered at it, tho' afterwards I better understood his Heavenly principles.[1]

The young Mather entered Harvard College in 1675 at the age of eleven,[2] having already read in Catullus, Terrence, Ovid, Virgil, Plato, Homer, and the Greek New Testament, and having begun the study of Hebrew grammar.[3] His progress was predictably rapid:

> I composed *Systems* both of Logick and Physick, in *Catachisms* of my own, which have since been used by many others . . . I made *Theses*, and Antitheses upon the main *Questions* that lay before me. For my *Declamations* I ordinarily took some Article of *Natural Philosophy* for my subject, by which contrivances I did Kill two birds with one Stone. Hundreds of books I read over, and I kept a Diary of my studies. *My son* I would not have mentioned these things, but that I may provoke *your* emulation.[4]

His spiritual life kept pace: at fourteen he was observing whole days of prayer and fasting, and at sixteen he had come to a firm enough assurance of his salvation to join the North Church as a communicant member. His life was not entirely untroubled during this period, however; he underwent a particularly severe hazing at the hands of the much older upperclassmen, he was prone to melancholy and hypochondria, and he developed a stammer. We can read these symptoms in various ways, depending upon our own childhood experience, our theology, and our personal response to mental and spiritual prodigies. Morison rejoices that "that insufferable young prig Cotton Mather was being kicked about, as he so richly deserved," by stronger spirits, while he enlisted others of more feeble wit to pray with him.[1] "In order to resist the tyranny of our own secular stereotype," David Levin comments, "I prefer to believe that if he was abused it was the sturdy spirits who prayed with him and the feeble wits who tormented him."[2] Mather himself undoubtedly felt that he was just another instance of Joseph among the brethren, and that his problems with some other children, in certain extraordinary contexts, were only a foretaste of the inevitable conflict concommitant to the spiritual leadership of his later life. Certainly the leaders of the college played the part of doting Jacobs effectively, alienating a certain proportion of the students from Mather and incidentally exposing him to tremendous temptations to pride and egoism. In his commencement oration, when Mather gained his bachelor's degree in 1678, President Urian Oakes proceeded to parse the elements of Mather's name, expecting that "in this youth Cotton and Mather shall, in fact as well as in name, join together and once more appear in life."[1]

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[1] Ibid., p. 33-4 (quoting the unpublished *Paterna* of Cotton Mather).

[2] Not, as usually recorded, at age twelve; *vide* Levin, *op*. *cit*., p. 158.

[3] *Ibid*., 35.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 36.

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[1] Morison, Harvard College in the Seventeenth Century, I (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), 417.

[2] Levin, "The Hazing of Cotton Mather," New England Quarterly, XXXVI (1963), 157. Levin's article examines the story of Mather's hazing as extrapolated from the data by the Boas', Morison, and Miss Porter, and shows that very little can be known about the actual problems Mather had in his childhood unless we speculate beyond the evidence. Peabody, a sharp critic of Mather, interprets the boy's boldness to rebuke evil in others as an instance of moral courage rather than priggishness (Life of Cotton Mather [Boston, 1836], p. 174). If this was the case, the young Mather must have had a certain degree of self-confidence and 'adjustment' unusual for a prodigy, so that the description of him as a sensitive and self-conscious child, by Murdock (DAB, XII, 386) and others, is hard to justify. His intellectual keenness and his interest in books, however, did open up for him a special relationship with the adult world which made his experience exceptional and perhaps difficult in the early years. It is hard to reconcile the Boas' picture of Mather in his twenties as a healthy, handsome young man at ease in the world (which the evidence supports) with the unusually neurotic childhood authorities have depicted for him since Wendell began the psychological exploration of Mather, Indeed, it is hard to square this image with the pathology that the Boas' themselves find in Mather, unless we assume that Puritan upbringing must have repressed and distorted the boy's inner life, and cheated him out of a normal childhood by vaulting him prematurely into sainthood, as Robbins suggests (A History of the Second Church [Boston, 1852], p. 92). Must we conclude, however, that the childhood piety exhibited and described by Mather, and later by Edwards, is necessarily abnormal, inauthentic, or pathological, simply because it is rare in our experience? The Puritans themselves found grounds in the gospels for assuming that it might be a norm of healthy Christian experience.

Cotton Mather had been reared with the ministry in mind, and had preached his first sermon to a gathering of young people when he was only sixteen;[2] but he hesitated to enter a pastoral career with a speech handicap, and turned for a while to the study of medicine. Continuing to attend Harvard while working as a tutor, he obtained the Master of Arts in 1681.[3] He had been preaching occasionally during this period in some of the more prestigious churches in the colony, and his stammer was clearing up thanks to the habit of deliberate speaking which he adopted at the advice of a schoolmaster. In november of 1681 he was invited to become the pastor of the church which John Davenport had founded in New Haven, a considerable testimony to his ability and reputation at the age of nineteen. After some vying between the North Church and the New Haven brethren and a series of "importunate votes" among the former to secure the young man for Boston, he determined to remain as an unordained assistant to his father and continue his studies.

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[1] Wendell, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-8.

[2] *Religious Societies* (Boston, 1724), which Mather revised and published late in his life.

[3] His thesis was, *Puncta Hebraica sunt Origenis Divinae*, an opinion he later changed after acquiring a facility at reading the language unpointed. *Vide* Cotton Mather, *Diary*, I (New York, 1957), 26 (September, 1681).

It is of course possible that Cotton elected to remain with his father in Boston partly because he would be closer there to the fulcrum of spiritual and ecclesiastical power in New England, and thus, as he would put it, in a better position to invest his talents for the doing of good. During this period Increase was continuing to grow in stature among the ministers. He had been virtually the instigator of the Reforming Synod of 1679, and had moderated its second session. In 1681 he became temporary acting head of Harvard College, in time to award Cotton his Master's Degree, and in 1685 he succeeded John Rogers as president of the college. In January of 1684 he exercized public political leadership for the first time by speaking in the Town-house against submission to the King's warrant to change the Charter, thus putting himself in the forefront of the Puritan leadership and catalyzing the opposition of a party of merchants whose economic interests and general outlook prompted them to submit to England. He tried to maintain a certain diplomatic leverage during the Andros regime which succeeded the change of the Charter, and when the churches in 1687 determined that someone should go to London to speak to the King about New England's condition, they chose the elder Mather. In May, 1688, Increase departed secretly for England under intense harassment from the government, leaving his son Cotton in charge of the Second Church.[1]

Cotton Mather had been unanimously called as pastor to the North Church before he had reached the age of twenty, in 1683, but had elected to remain on a less formal basis as his father's assistant, because of his extreme youth and his hesitancy to take on what he felt were awesome responsibilities involved in the pastorate. The call was reissued in 1684, and he was ordained in 1685. He continued and expanded a vigorous pastoral program in the neighborhood of the North Church, which included evangelism among the poor and criminals, and the creation of a young men's religious society in the south of town, as well as the regular labors of preaching, study, and calling. He was married on May 4, 1686, to Abigail Phillips. By the time of his father's departure for England he had become, at twenty-five, an experienced pastor and preacher, well able to keep the church in order while his father was abroad. Accessions to the church membership during Increase' absence -- which included, in 1689, Cotton's wife, Abigail -- continued at the regular average of twenty-five *per annum*, and in 1691 there was something of a revival, with forty-nine added. In 1692, while Increase was still abroad, Cotton admitted the first person to membership in the North Church under the halfway covenant, a liberal innovation which aroused resistance among some conservatives in the congregation.

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[1] Murdock, Increase Mather (Cambridge, Mass., 1926), pp. 125-189.

His published literary production, beginning in the early 1680's with some occasional poems and broadening out to include a fair number of sermons through the period of his father's absence, had begun to recommend Cotton Mather's gifts to the public even beyond Boston. Having been encouraged in self-esteem from his childhood, Mather had set his sights on greatness in the conduct of his life's work. A Diary entry from his twenty-third year, written in February, 1685 under the heading *Res Mirabilis et Memoranda,* recounts a vision he had after prolonged fasting and prayer, in which an angel applied to him the words of Ezek. 31:3-5, 7, 9:

> Behold hee was a Cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, and with a shadowing Shrowd, and of an high Stature, and his Top was among the thick Boughs. The Waters made him great, the Keep sett him up on high, with her Rivers running about his Plants. His Heighth was exalted above all the Trees of the Field, and his Boughs were multiplied, and his Branches became long, because of the Multitude of Waters, when hee shott forth. Thus was hee fair in his Greatness in the Length of his Branches for his Root was by the great Waters. Nor was any Tree in the Garden of God like unto him in his Beauty. I have made him

> fair by the multitude of his Branches so that all the Trees of Eden, that were in the Garden of God envied him.

Mather goes on to develop the application of the passage rather cautiously (the whole text except the biblical quotation is in Latin, since the author knew it would expose him to the charge of enthusiasm).

> This Angel said that he was sent by the Lord Jesus to bear a clear answer to the prayers of a certain youth, and to bear back his words in reply . . . And in particular this Angel spoke of the influence his branches should have, and of the books this youth should write and publish, not only in America, but in Europe. And he added certain special prophecies of the great works this youth should do for the church of Christ in the revolutions that are now in hand. Lord Jesus! What is the meaning of this marvel? From the wiles of the Devil, I beseech thee, deliver and defend Thy most unworthy servant.[1]

This is indeed a marvellous and memorable prediction, if it dates from the time of the original entry and is not an enlargement performed in Mather's later copying of his diaries.

Despite his youth, in his father's absence Mather was recognized as an able leader in behalf of Puritan interests. On June 12, 1690, he was elected a Fellow of Harvard College, becoming at 27 the youngest man ever so honored. When the revolution occurred in England and the Bostonians seized the reins from Andros in 1689, he spoke out to the public shortly before the insurrection in an "affectionate and moving Speech" which pressed "Peace and Love and Submission unto a legal Government, tho' he suffered from some tumultuous People, by doing so . . . "[2] The 'tumultuous' faction did not fail later to accuse Mather of seeking to manage the revolution to suit his private ambitions.

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[1] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957) 86-7 (February, 1685). The translation is from Wendell, Cotton Mather (New York, 1892), p-64. Oddly enough, Mather never seems to have reflected on the context of the biblical verses. They are spoken by the prophet to the king of Egypt, and the ensuing verses are strangely ironic when compared with Mather's later career: "Because . . . his heart is lifted up in his height; I have therefore delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen . . . And strangers, the terrible of the nations, have cut him off, and have left him . . . To the end that none of all the trees by the waters exalt themselves for their height, neither shoot up their top among the thick boughs, neither their trees stand up in their height . . ." (Ezekiel 31:10-12, 14, RSV).

[2] Samuel Mather, Life of Cotton Mather (Boston, 1729).

Meanwhile Increase Mather had been seeking unseccessfully to interest King James to restore the vacated Charter and secure Puritan theocracy in New England again, and incidentally to procure another charter for Harvard which would anchor it permanently to Calvinism. Gradually recognizing that William was unwilling to relinquish as much control over New England as the colonists desired, he determined pragmatically to reach a compromise and accept a more liberal government. His close friendship with Baxter and other English moderates had moved him away from theocratic absolutism and toward the ideals of religious freedom which had been developing in England since the Revolutionary period -- if, indeed, he had not already been travelling in this direction before arrival in London, since his ties with English life and thought had always been close and strong since his youth. Thus the new charter he helped obtain, adopted in October of 1691, enlarged the franchise beyond the church membership, and admitted royal appointment of the governor, balanced by a popularly elected council. Increase Mather's diplomatic skill had gained him sufficient respect in London that he was permitted to name the chief officers who were to put this government into operation. While Cotton Mather rejoiced at home over the possibilities for doing good in this situation, other voices claimed that his father had sold out to the establishment in exchange for the right to control the New England government.[1] The Mathers were encountering opposition now from religious conservatives who disliked the new charter and wanted to return to the theocracy, and from others among the merchant class who wanted looser connections with the home country for economic reasons.[1]

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[1] This thesis has been echoed by nationalist historians ever since. Bancroft, for example, says that the Mathers secured a charter that claimed only English liberties and not charter liberties, and crushed the revolt which would have brought a greater measure of independence (History of the United States of America, I [New York, 1890], 50.)

This undercurrent of conflict was shortly intensified by a new crisis, the witchcraft cases in Salem. Most of the civilized West, at this time, including the educated classes and the clergy, believed firmly in both the existence and the powers of sorcerers -- supported, as they thought, by biblical data, the judgment of authorities in the main Christian traditions, and common knowledge of enchantments and preternatural phenomena. Puritan theologians such as Perkins, Bernard, and Gaule, had sought to define carefully the methods of detecting and trying supposed witches, but had not contested the existence of real and operative sorcery. During the latter half of the seventeenth century, religious apologists of all persuasions, including a surprising proportion of the budding scientific community, made the unhappy mistake of seizing on the existence of witchcraft as a prime piece of evidence to use against deistic 'Sadducees' who were calling in question the whole realm of the supernatural. There had been an unusual circulation of this apologetic literature in English-speaking circles before the Salem affair.[2]

The New England clergy were particularly vulnerable to credulity in the matter of witchcraft for several reasons. They considered that the colonists had invaded a territory which had been under the control of the Devil, exercized through sorcerers among the natives, and they felt that his agency was particularly active in the New World to solicit traitors against the examplary Christian state established there. And as the condition of spiritual decline became apparent in the second generation, the ministers were susceptible to the idea that New England deserved a plague of witches. It is not surprising, then, that Increase Mather, one of the main opponents of the decline, and an avid scientific amateur -- in a day when scientific interest was so omnivorous as to include among the data of its investigations supernatural occurences -- should publish, in 1684, his Illustrious Providences, which devotes some space to the discussion of cases of witchcraft. In 1689, Cotton Mather published a similar work devoted entirely to witchcraft, the Memorable Providences, including in it the account of his own ministry to the Goodwin family in Boston during the seizure of their children by an apparent enchantment involving demonic possession. Mather's labors in this instance were strictly pastoral, involving concerted prayer and counselling with the children. A washerwoman was tried, convicted and executed for the crime of witchcraft in this case, but Mather had no part in the judicial proceedings, though he sought to give the woman spiritual help in counsel. The Memorable Providences was reprinted in 1691 in London, prefaced by numerous ministerial recommendations, including one of Baxter which lauded it as incontrovertable proof of the reality of sorcery. Included in it is a sermon Mather preached in 1691 under the same title as his later book, "Wonders of the Invisible World," which among other things stresses that in the last times God may permit an extraordinary descent of demons, as a punishment for apostasy and a prelude to the end.

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[1] Clifford Shipton, "The New England Clergy of the 'Glacial Age,'" _Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts_, XXXII (1933), 24-54.

[2] Kittredge notes publications defending the existence of witchcraft, within the two decades before the Mather works, by the Cambridge Platonist Henry More and the otherwise rather skeptical Joseph Glanvil (author of _The Vanity of Dogmatizing_), the physicist Robert Boyle, Newton's master Isaac Barrow, Meric Casaubon, and Baxter, among others. _Vide Witchcraft in Old and New England_ (Cambridge, Mass., 1929), pp. 329-338.

Since the problems with the Parris family in 1692 had some external resemblance to those of the Goodwin family described by Cotton Mather, it is possible to make something os a case for the assertion that his book, and his father's, were inflammatory and partly to blame for the Salem scandal.

But this is stretching the evidence, considering the number of works on this subject then in circulation, and the common occurence of isolated instances of witchcraft.

The new government, having appointed a court of Oyer and Terminer -- whether the ministers had a hand in this, we cannot tell -- proceeded to try and execute one witch, and then ask the clergy for their advice about proceeding further to investigate the outbreak, which was reaching endemic proportions. Even before this trial, on May 31, 1692, Cotton Mather had written to John Richards warning specifically against the use of spectral evidence,[1] and seeming to recommend the release of confessing criminals, which is a stage more merciful than common English practice.[2] The advice of the ministers, which was drafted by Cotton Mather, and signed by all the Boston clergy, is one of those protean documents which can be cited by all sides to prove their point. It heavily emphasizes the need for caution in the methods of trial and especially discourages the use of spectral evidence, but it does recommend that the trials proceed. It is perhaps best viewed as a clear application of the principals of the Puritan theologians to the present problem, and it is considerably more cautious than common English judicial procedure. It is hard to avoid conjecture in reconstructing the part the Mathers played in the rest of the Salem outbreak. Cotton expresses himself as one thoroughly convinced that the prosecution is an effective retaliation against the Devil's plot against New England, in a letter to John Cotton of Aug. 5, 1692.[3] He was later present at the execution of George Burroughs, and according to both Calef and Sewall spoke out to the crowd after his death justifying the sentence, at a point when some were inclined to waver because of the man's protestations of innocense. Increase Mather, who had been present at the trial of Burroughs, seconded his son's judgment of Burrough's guilt.

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[1] Wendell, Cotton Mather (New York, 1891), p. 107.

[2] Murdock, Increase Mather (Cambridge, Mass., 1926), p. 294.

[3] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 142-3.

But there is no evidence that either Mather attended the trials except on two occasions, and Cotton was severely ill in this year. The assumption must be that the main scope of their involvement in the trials was to follow the news of them. But the Mathers, and the other clergy and enlightened laity, soon became uneasy with the progress of the trials. One of the Mather government appointees, Nathaniel Saltonstall, resigned from the court; Samuel Willard published a tract against spectral evidence; and Thomas Brattle, in a private letter on October 8, 1692, questioned the methods of the court and referred to Increase Mather and other ministers as opposing the procedure in the trials. Five days before this, Increase had read to the Cambridge Association of ministers the manuscript of his Cases of Conscience (1693), a searching but not accusatory critique of the methods of the court. Most of the ministers rallied fairly rapidly to the cause of halting the trials, although Stoughton and other judges remained unconvinced, and a majority of the public seemed to support them. By January of 1693, Governor Phips had seen the wisdom of the ministers' advice, and the fifty-three persons yet remaining to be tried were either acquitted or pardoned. At the request of the court, Cotton Mather wrote his Wonders of the Invisible World,[1] setting forth the traditional Puritan approach to the handling of witch-trials, and endeavoring to demonstrate the reality of Satanic agency in the affair, in which the Mathers and virtually all others in New England believed. The book also put the best possible construction on the actions of the court in the trials. There were many who found it in contradiction to Increase Mather's Cases of Conscience, but the latter specifically endorsed its opinions in the Preface to the Cases when this appeared in London. It seems that the Mathers were in fair agreement about the trials; they believed that there had been real witchcraft, that there had been errors in the trials (perhaps also Satanically energized), but that it was best to pull the mantle of charity over the errors of the magistracy. Neither of the Mathers can be represented as "whipping up" the affair as a stalking horse for their own political power; their united efforts in all that occurred were directed toward moderating the principles of the court, and fighting the descent of devils partly by a just administration of penalties, but principally by fasting and prayer. Cotton Mather especially gave himself to these remedies, preached and counselled with the suspects in prison, and took six of the energoumens into his own home to effect a spiritual cure, keeping notably silent on their conjectures about the identity of their human oppressors. While there was a limited popular stir against the Mathers and the other ministers instigated by Robert Calef at this time, there is absolutely no evidence of the massive popular uprising against the supposed Mather theocracy which the nineteenth century critics have conjectured.[1]

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[1] Mather, Wonders of the Invisible World (Boston, 1693).

Some of these have judged it to be especially incriminating that Cotton Mather never, like Judge Sewall, publicly confessed any errors in the handling of the witchcraft affair, but this is understandable if he was relatively uninvolved in the control of the public proceedings. Even so, at the time Sewall made his public announcement, Mather noted in his Diary his affliction with discouraging thoughts of divine displeasure, "for my not appearing with Vigor enough to stop the proceedings of the Judges, when the Inextricable Storm from the Invisible World assaulted the Countrey," but he felt himself quieted by a divine assurance -- apparently in some measure involving his confession and forgiveness.[1] But on the previous day he had read a set of Articles of Confession, at a public fast day, a rather typical Jeremiad, which had enumerated in its list of sins this item: "Wicked Sorceries have been practised in the Land, and yett in the Troubles from the Divels, thereby brought in among us, those Errors, on both Hands, were committed, which wee have Cause to bewayl with much Abasement of Soul before the Lord."[2] Sixteen years later, in 1713, he was still seeking in prayer to understand "the Meaning of the Descent from the Invisible World, which nineteen years ago produced in a Sermon from me, a good part of what is now published."[3]

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[1] Murdock, Increase Mather (Cambridge, Mass., 1926), pp. 287-316; Wendell, op. cit., pp. 88-123.

With the recovery of a measure of his health and the dying down of the Salem outbreak, Cotton Mather began in the summer of 1693 to grapple with a variety of literary labors, among them two major ones: the preparation of a history of New England, and the compilation of a giant collection of comments on the whole Bible. He was admirably equipped for a certain kind of literary and scholarly labor. He seems to have an immensely retentive memory for what he had read, and he had developed a facility for getting to the heart of books by scanning through them quite rapidly until he came to something new to his knowledge, and then attaching it indelibly to his store of knowledge. We can imagine what a mind of this stamp could do with the immense libraries which he and his father were building. Charles Chauncy observed that "There were scarcely any books written, but he had some how or other got a sight of them. He was the greatest redeemer of time I ever knew."[1] The results of this learning he could forge into prose in any one of several current styles, including the lean urbanity which was becoming the mode in England; but his favorite mode of expression was the thick fabric of allusive essay, jewelled with quotations, which he adopted from Thomas Fuller and Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy. The style was natural to him for two reasons: first, because he always regarded himself primarily as an editor, collector and synthesist of other men's opinions; and second, because there were many times when he plainly enjoyed showing his learning. Moses Coit Tyler puts the case against him as a writer in a way which is not unjust:

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[1] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 216 (February, 1697).

[2] Ibid., p. 215.

[3] Ibid., II, 200 (April, 1713).

> The mind of Cotton Mather was so possessed by the books he had read, that his most common thought had to force its way into utterance through dense hedged and jungles of quotation . . . It is quite evident, too that, just as the poet often shapes his idea to his rhymes and is helped to an idea by his rhyme, so Mather's mind acquired the knack of steering his thought so as to take in his quotation, from which in turn, perhaps, he reaped another thought.[2]

Mather's allusiveness is unquestionably pedantry; but a generation accustomed to Eliot, Pound, and the Seventeenth Century metaphysical poets may find values in the symbolic richness of Mather's allusions, and the quaintness of his conceits, which were invisible in the nineteenth century. Tyler finds in Mather's historical writing "an insuperable fondness for tumultous, swelling, and flabby declamation, and for edifying remarks, in place of a statement of the exact facts in the case . . . "[3] This points, however, to the goal at which Mather aimed in most of his writing spiritual edification. In the Magnalia his goal is history taught as a stimulus to

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[1] Henry Ware, Two Discourses . . . (Boston, 1821), p.20.

[2] Moses Coit Tyler, A History of American Literature, I (New York, 1879), 88.

[3] Ibid., p. 83.

Christian experience, and what he has given us as a result is a rather mixed bag of historical data surrounding a marvellous series of character-portraits, which bring to life for us with considerable individuality the spiritual leaders of New England, and speak volumes to us about the nature of Puritan piety. Besides the Magnalia, which was completed in 1697 and published in 1702, Mather was laboring to bring to birth in these years a massive tide of Erbaungsliteratur with which to counteract the decline of New England: published sermons, tracts, manuals of piety, and a variety of other literary forms. To the contemporary reader who has no taste for Puritan piety, this material seems vacuous because of its carelessness for facts and structures unrelated to the Kingdom of God as Mather saw it. But Mather would only accuse such critics of throwing away the kernel of his creations, and trying to eat the shell.

During the middle 90's, specifically in the year 1696, Mather began to develop in his thoughts and prayers a considerable interest in world affairs. This was centered first of all on political concerns in the Protestant-Catholic vying between England and France, but it gradually developed into a concern for the reviving of the ecumenical church in preparation for the return of Christ, which, like his father, he felt was imminent. It was fortunate that he was sustained by such eschatological optimism during these years, because the spiritual interests of New England as the Mathers saw them were in for a series of painful shocks as the turn of the century drew on. For one thing, there was a gradual consolidation of political opposition to the Mathers under the leadership of Elisha Cooke, who had been one of Increase' dissatisfied companions in London and who wanted the colony independent both of the King and the Mathers. For another, there was a different party which opposed the Mathers for religious reasons. The tutors who had been managing Harvard College under Increase' presidency, William Brattle and John Leverett, had been quietly recommending to the students books by latitudinarian writers in the Church of England, presenting a kind of religion which was, as Benjamin Colman said, "all calm and soft and melting."[1] Oddly enough, Increase does not seem to have been able to detect the drift of his tutors during most of his tenure as president of the college. Gradually the difference in viewpoint became apparent, however, as the Mathers found themselves facing a broad-church coalition within the Harvard Corporation, led by the Brattles, Leverett, and the Rev. Ebenezer Pemberton. At the beginning of 1698, Leverett and the Brattles quietly set about organizing a new church based on slightly looser principles than were typical in the Congregational way. In November of 1699, the young Benjamin Colman, having been ordained in London by Presbyterian hands, arrived as pastor of the Brattle St. Church, and the founders published a manifesto to support their innovations, which included the omission of the requirement of relating spiritual experience for church membership, and some other practices which seemed to weaken the spiritual fabric of the church (such as admitting the children of any professing Christian to baptism, and the election of ministers by all contributing to their support), and others which were sore points in the troubled history of Puritan/Anglican relations (Liturgical use of the Lord's Prayer, and the dumb reading of Scripture). The Mathers were intensely disturbed by this public eruption of dissent. Nevertheless they worked to compose the differences, halting a counter-manifesto in the presses while Cotton went to negotiate with the other party, convincing them to unite with the other Boston churches on the basis of the Heads of Agreement of the Presbyterian-Congregational merger that Increase Mather had assisted while he was in London. The Mathers held a day of fasting and prayer with the new church on January 31st, with Increase preaching on "following Peace with Holiness," and Cotton concluding in prayer. Nevertheless the Mathers felt that they must go on record publicly against the innovations in polity, and Increase' Order of the Gospel (1700), which stuck fairly well to principles and avoided personalities, touched off a brief but vicious pamphlet warfare between the two parties.[1]

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[1] Morison, Harvard College in the Seventeenth Century, I. (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), 505-6.

The supposed "liberalism" of the new church has been unduly emphasized by those who have sought to find in it the beginnings of doctrinal departure in New England. The fact is that Colman was reasonably orthodox, and the church remained so throughout the Eighteenth Century. Moreover, few New England churches followed its innovations in polity. We might suppose that most of the antipathy resulted from politics, personalities, and a conditioned-reflex reaction of the Mathers against changing the polity the New England fathers had established. But although these factors were operative, the Mathers detected also a real difference in spirit in the new church and its pastor, a removal from the heights and depths of the old Puritan Calvinism, with its soul-struggles and its careful treading of the median line between presumption and despair. The spirit of the new church was based on a comfortable relationship with a uniformly benevolent God, enveloped in the warm complacency and sophisticated rationality which formed the emotional atmosphere of the later Unitarian Christianity. In most ways it was more refined than the earnest and vigorous Puritanism of the Mathers, and in many respects closer to truth, but it was wanting in the rugged biblical realism of the older faith, which described a sovereign and uncontrollable God who could be dangerous confronting human complacency. The new church was to become (next to the Anglican church in Boston) the rallying point for wealth and aristocracy. It was not heterodox, but it had shifted in the direction of becoming a social convenience for the prominent families of Boston, and it lacked a concern for the reality of Christian experience defined in the Puritan tradition. It was content with mental assent to doctrine and an outwardly virtuous life, criteria which Puritanism had been stigmatizing as sub-Christian for a hundred years. The Log College Men, in setting up the standards for ministerial candidates, some years later, insisted on orthodoxy plus the relation of spiritual experience, and counted anything less to be a dangerous move toward the spread of unawakened religiosity.

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[1] Wendell, op. cit., pp. 130-153; Murdock, Increase Mather (Cambridge, Mass., 1926), pp. 337-374.

During the period of this controversy, the General Court was exerting pressure to dislodge Increase Mather from the presidency of Harvard College by requiring, not unreasonably, his residence there. The motivation behind this pressure was partly pragmatic, and partly political (on the part of Elisha Cooke and other conservative advocates of the old charter), and probably not for the most part connected with Mather's religious stance, according to Murdock.[1] When the Court eventually appointed Samuel Willard to replace, the elder Mather, in the summer of 1701, the loss of the position was undoubtedly in some measure a relief to Increase, who was far more interested in preaching to the many hundreds in his church than in supervising the tutoring of forty or fifty boys; but Cotton took the matter hard, as involving a loss of his father's honor. In the meantime, in November of 1700, Robert Calef's More Wonders of the Invisible World arrived from London. Calef, a Boston merchant about whom we know little except what is expressed in his book, had been gathering materials for this work since the witchcraft trials, and in its latter stages he had been assisted by the Brattles, according to Sibley.[1] The Mathers had known about the preparation of the book since June of 1698,[2] and Cotton had been praying against its appearance:

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[1] Murdock, Increase Mather (Cambridge, Mass., 1926), pp. 354, 358.

> There is a sort of a *Sadducee* in this Town; a man, who makes little Conscience of lying; and one whom no Reason will divert from his malicious Purposes. This man, out of Enmity to mee, for my public Asserting of such Truths, as the Scripture has taught us, about the Existence and Influence of the *Invisible World*, hath often abused mee, with venemous *Reproaches*, and most palpable *Injuries*. I have hitherto taken little Notice of his Libels and Slanders; but this Contempt enrages him. I understand, that hee apprehends the shortest way to deliver People, from the *Beleef* of the Doctrines which not I only, but all the Ministers of Christ in the World, have hitherto mentained, will bee, to show the World, what an *ill Man* I am. To this End, I understand, hee hath written a Volumn of invented and notorious *Lies*, and also searched a large Part of the *Books* which I have published, and with false Quotations of little Scraps here and there from them, endeavoured for to cavil at them . . . Wherefore, in my Supplications, I first of all declared unto the Lord, that I freely *Forgave* this miserable Man, all the Wrongs which hee did unto mee, and I pray'd the Lord also to *forgive* him, and to do him good even as to my own Soul. But then, I pleaded with the Lord, that the *Design* of this Man, was to hurt my precious *Opportunities* of glorifying my Glorious Lord Jesus Christ; and I could not but cry unto the Lord, that Hee would rescue my Opportunities of serving my Lord Jesus Christ, from the Attempts of this Man to damnify them.[3]

When the book appeared in Boston in 1700, Increase Mather burned a copy of it in the Harvard yard, according to Sibley -- the traditional way of stigmatizing a libellous book.[4] Cotton Mather and six friends issued a defence of Mather's character and conduct,[5] and Mather had Calef arrested for libel, but later dropped the suit after a conversation with him. Mather seems to have felt that there was little disposition to believe the man in Boston, since Willard and other objects of his attack had been able to rebuff Calef by simply ignoring him. He did not reckon on the use which generations of future anti-Puritans have made of the book, carrying its implications far beyond what Calef dared to intimate openly.

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[1] J. L. Sibley, *Biographical Sketches of Graduates of Harvard University*, III (Cambridge, Mass., 1885), 17, 18.

[2] C. Mather, *Diary*, I (New York, 1957), 264 (June, 1698).

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Sibley, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

[5] *Some Few Remarks* . . . (Boston, 1703).

On the subject of witchcraft, Calef's work is a far better book than Mather thought it was. It is an inarticulate, poorly organized, but telling attack, first, on the Puritan theory of the real agency of witches, and second, on the mismanagement of the trials in New England, and its final summary is particularly cogent. On the subject of the Mathers, and the Puritan ministers in general, however, the book is either erroneous or openly guilty of misrepresentation, or both. In this area, it is basically a political attack, dredging up all the old resentments against the handling of the Charter, and arguing that the clergy must be stopped from this kind of meddling. Its personal attack on the Mathers was accepted at the time only among the limited circle of their political and religious enemies, and revived by these during the 1720's in the inoculation controversy. Cotton's ultimate comment on Calef's book is written on the flyleaf of the copy in his library: "Job XXXI. 35, 36. My desire is that mine adversary had written a Book. Surely I would take it upon my Shoulder, and bind it as a crown to me. Co: Mather."[1]

During the succeeding years of the first decade of the eighteenth century, the Mathers gradually withdrew from political activity. Neither of them made a practice of attending the meetings of the college Corporation from this point. When President Willard died, in 1707, they had considerable hope that Cotton Mather would be elected, but the Corporation chose Leverett instead, to their considerable chagrin. They had had some hopes earlier of obtaining enough influence with the new governor, Joseph Dudley, to get the college charter finally reorganized so as to preserve orthodoxy; but this gentleman proved unsusceptible to 'influence for good,' and after the humiliation of Leverett's election both Mathers wrote him fiery letters of pastoral rebuke, which drew unfavorable comment then, and have done so among later critics. Cotton Mather continued to snipe at the Governor, in sermons, using "provoking plainness and Freedom in telling this Ahab of his wickedness," until this apparently dishonest and inept official was replaced by Governor Shute in 1716.[1] But apart from these incidents the Mathers withdrew to devote themselves to the affairs of the church, their families, and their literary labors. Cotton lost his first wife in 1702, remarrying a widow, Elizabeth Hubbard, the following year. With his _magnum opus_, the _Magnalia_, finally off the press in London, he continued to pour out a host of minor writings in various forms. His literary output had projected his fame in Europe with none of the political shadows which darkened it at home. It had also gained him a list of correspondents abroad which may have numbered fifty at one time, among whom we find men of the highest stature among his contemporaries, including Defoe, Sir Richard Blackmore, Watts, William Whiston, Lord Chancellor King, and John Desaguliers. In 1710, the University of Glasgow conferred upon him the title of Doctor of Divinity, and from this point Mather wore a ring embossed with his old life-symbol, a spreading tree, inscribed _Glascua Rigavit_,[2] finding excuse for this in the constant ejaculations for fruitfulness to which this emblem provoked him. In 1713 Mather was proposed and virtually inducted as a member of the Royal Society in London, although his enemies then and since have found occasion to contest the validity of his claim.[1]

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[1] J. H. Tuttle, "The Libraries of the Mathers," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, New Series, XX (1911), 302.

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[1] C. Mather, _Diary_, II (New York, 1957), 15 (September, 1709).

[2] "Glasgow has watered it."

Among Cotton Mather's correspondents was Josiah Woodward, through whom he had heard of the progress of reforming societies in England,[2] and in the early 1700's Mather began to promote the spread of such groups in New England. Another London correspondent of marked importance was Anthony William Boehm, a German expatriate and a vigorous and brilliant exponent of Pietism.[3] In the remarkable accounts of the growth of Francke's work which he obtained through Boehm, Mather found the answers to his prayers for the spiritual awakening of Protestantism, and he also found a style of live Christianity which agreed very closely with his own redaction of Puritanism. In 1710, referring to two of his newly published works, he notes that "I represented, the Methods of *Piety* proposed in these Essayes, as being the true *American Pietism*."[4] Seven years later, writing to Boehm, he says, "I rejoice to find the *Magnalia Christi Americana*, fallen into your hands; and I verily beleeve, the *American Puritanism*, to be so much of a Peece with the Frederician Pietism, that if it were possible for "the Book to be transferr'd unto our Friends in the Lower Saxony, it would find some Acceptance, and be a little serviceable to their glorious Intentions."[1] Ernst Benz has shown that Mather had sent his Magnalia to Francke immediately on its publication, and had carried on a correspondence with him since 1709, the early exchanges of which are now lost.[2] Francke wrote a long letter to Mather in Latin in 1714 describing the growth of Pietism and its relation to current missionary activity, which Mather translated and published under his own name,[3] and which Boehm reprinted as an appendix to his English translation of Francke's Pietas Hallensis.[4] A number of other shorter letters were exchanged between Mather and Francke. As this correspondence proceeded, Mather began to think of himself and the other Puritan ministers as American Pietists, and there was a considerable influence upon his own thought and labors. It was not so much an influx of content, for most of the characteristic stresses of Pietism were already operative in his tradition. It was rather the shock of religious cosmopolitanizing, as he suddenly became aware that something spiritually vital could flourish outside the tight structure of Calvinistic Puritanism, and could in fact be the center of the only religious revival currently observable in Christendom, the revival for which he had been praying since the 1690's. His own Bonifacius, published in 1710, may be considered the *Pia Desideria* of his "true American Pietism." Throughout the remainder of his life his answer to New England's spiritual decline was to promote this pietism, with its components of stress on spiritual revival, cultural transformation through voluntary societies, ecumenical union among the churches, and concern for world mission.[1]

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[1] Kittredge has shown that the election was actually intended in 1713 and omitted through a blunder, but carried through in 1723 when the mistake had been discovered. *Vide* "Cotton Mather's Election into the Royal Society," *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, XIV (1911), 81-114.

[2] His library contained a copy of the fourth edition of Woodward's *Account of the Progress of the Reformation of Manners* . . . (London, 1701); *vide* J. H. Tuttle, *op. cit*.

[3] Boehm, who had studied at Halle from 1693 until 1698 and worked for several years in the Orphan House, had emigrated to England in 1701 to work as a tutor in several German families. He was appointed pastor by Prince George in 1705, and continued in this work until his death in 1722, translating a number of the works of Arndt and Francke into English. *Vide* H. E. Jacobs, *A History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States* (New York, 1893), pp. 143-4.

[4] C. Mather, *Diary*, II (New York, 1957), 23 (February, 1710).

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[1] Ibid., 411 (February, 1717).

[2] Benz, "Pietist and Puritan Sources of Early Protestant World Missions," Church History, XX (1951), 32.

[3] C. Mather, Nuncia Bona e Terra Longinqua (Boston, 1715).

[4] Contrary to Benz' assumption, Boehm cannot be represented as looking askance at Mather's use of Francke's letter. Mather wrote to Boehm in 1716, "I have had no letters from our Excellent Friends in the Frederician University, ever since that rich & long one, which you have, highly to my satisfaction, translated & published . . . " Vide Kuno Francke, "Cotton Mather and August Hermann Francke," Harvard Studies and Notes in Philosophy and Literature, V (1896), 64.

Perry Miller, who notes that Mather was joined in this emphasis by Sewall, Prince, Foxcroft, and Cooper, gives a good summary of the outward historical forces active in the forging of the new pietism:

> The most skeptical can understand how in the clanking days of the Roman Empire, to the sound of legions' tread, a voice had arisen saying that the kingdom is within; history is not amazed that in the turmoil of the English Civil Wars overheated imaginations had struck out for the Fifth Monarchy and attempted to enthrone purity. But the commotions of New England were not spectacular; ostensibly its history was a gradual evolution, from a charter government by saints to a charter expounded in the name of property rights. Where was the aggravation? It is no answer to say that all the leaders were even if not quite so obviously as Cotton Mather, neurotics; the forces that wrought this transformation can be summarized: the growth of a capitalist economy, imperial interference, an enforced yielding to toleration, class struggles. The result can be given a name: Pietism. What had happened here was that under the impact of the blows, mild as they may seem, of the repeal of the charter, of fragmentation in ecclesiastical and political theory, the human spirit sought for surcease. It found that life might yet be worth living if piety could still pervade society.[2]

All of this is true; all the forces described did combine to help transform New England Christianity from a theocratic to a pietistic organism, from a rigid structure with a hard exoskeleton of creed and polity to a leavening movement. But there is a curious wrongness about the end result of this analysis, true as are its particulars. Like much of Miller's analysis of Mather and the Puritanism of this period, it gives one the feeling of looking at a photographic negative, correct in its detail but unrealistic in its overall effect. The Pietism Mather was advocating, like that which was germinating at a number of points in Europe -- and under differing historical conditions -- was not the tired, last-ditch effort of an evaporating superstition: it was a vital force for spiritual, social, and cultural transformation, the first of many related waves of energy which were to sweep across Christendom in the next two centuries. We do not understand this movement correctly if we see it as a mere intellectual epiphenomenon, the creature of the "real" social and economic forces in its environment. Its idealogy and its spirit must be considered elements in a living organism, adapting itself in slightly different ways to differing historical circumstances, pressed and shaped by these, and yet essentially independent of them in its growth.

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[1] J. P. Hoskins agrees with this analysis that the influence of German Pietism on Mather was a matter of indirect stimulation, the resonance of two sympathetic traditions, rather than a direct transfer of content between the two pietisms. In his tendency to assert the European origin of the later Awakening, however, he is inclined to exaggerate the difference between the Puritan and Pietist traditions, and is led to conclude that Mather saw more unity in the two streams than actually existed. *Vide* Hoskins, "German Influence on Religious Life and Thought in America During the Colodal Period," *Princeton Theological Review*, V (1907), pp. 225-7.

[2] Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), p. 408.

Since the rest of this work is devoted to an examination of the principles and practice of Christian experience which were Mather's main concern in the last several decades of his life, a brief sketch of the events framing these years will suffice. In ecclesiastical affairs, the Mathers had been from the beginning in opposition to Solomon Stoddard's proposals for the centralization of the Congregational polity (as well as his sacramental theory), but in 1705 Cotton Mather joined with Colman, Wadsworth and a number of others in recommending a closer synodical linkage between the churches, as one means of checking the spiritual decline and promoting the health of the churches. The Proposals of 1705 were apparently too 'liberal' for the majority of adherents to the old Congregational Way, however, and this particular cause simply subsided into silence after the effective attack upon it made by John Wise in 1713.[1] As Harvard College departed increasingly from the intellectual and spiritual standards which Cotton Mather desired for it -- he considered education an instrument primarily for the nurture of an intellectually advanced but biblically based world-outlook, informed by vital piety, and Harvard seemed to him at this point to be aiming neither to be biblical, or pious, or profound -- Mather transferred his allegiance to the new college in New Haven, founded in 1700, and secured for it an endowment and a name from a merchant named Elihu Yale.

A number of events in family and public life conspired to make the last decade of Mather's life a rather gloomy one, which it was also for the interests of Puritanism in New England. His second marriage, like the first, had been a happy one, but Elizabeth Mather died in 1713. It was not long after his third marriage to Mrs. Lydia George, in 1715, that she began to show signs of a serious mental illness which produced in her occasional periods of violent hostility toward him, and which continued intermittently during the rest of their life together. Of the fifteen children born to Mather in the first two of these unions, nine had died in infancy. Of the remaining six, his favorite daughter Katy died in 1716, probably in her twenties; Abigail died in 1721 at twenty-seven; and Elizabeth died in 1726, aged twenty-two. While Samuel and Hannah Mather outlived their father and had productive lives, Mather's favorite son, Cressy, born in 1699, was a wastrel, publicly charged with bastardy in 1717, and lost at sea in 1724. Apart from these problems in his immediate family, Mather had taken on the administration of an estate in his third wife's family, and was under terrible financial pressure from this himself until his congregation took a collection to assist him. Apart from these family troubles,

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[1] John Wise, The Churches' Quarrel Espoused (New York, 1713).

Mather had suffered a great deal of abuse, and had almost been assassinated, as a result of the one action he ever did which commends the favor of nearly all historians, advising the use of inoculation in the smallpox epidemic of 1721. In 1724, a year after his father's death, he was again disappointed in being passed over for the presidency of Harvard, though not unexpectedly. The effect of these troubles on him is visible in a regression to the Jeremiad mood in the 20's and occasional outbreaks of irascibility. But in his diary he also speaks much of the sanctifying effects of this schooling of the cross, particularly in the mortification of pride, a problem of which he had been aware since his youth. After a period of depression at the end of his life, he died in a state of calm and peaceful joy. Asked by his son Samuel for a word of counsel, he murmured the one word which had been his life's motto: Fructuosus.

Judged by the range of his activity and the quantity of his writing, Mather was indeed a fruitful tree. His literary production included four hundred forty-four published works, and fifteen unpublished manuscripts.[1] The greater bulk of this is composed of sermon collections and individual sermons, often published at the request of members of his audience and underwritten by them. Much of the rest of his production, like his sermons, was directed toward the practical spiritual needs of his people and other Christians within range of his concern: tracts, manuals of piety and catechetical aids for distribution during ministerial visits, and pastoral letters aimed at situations throughout Western Christendom. In the realm of scholarship, his medical and scientific writings are abreast and sometimes ahead of their time, despite that fascination with the supernormal which has been scored as extraordinary credulity by historians unfamiliar with the mind of the period, and his historiography is invaluable despite its flaws. He is at his weakest in his exegetical thesaurae, which are eollations of allegorical minutiae from patristic, rabbinical, and philosophical sources; and in his poetry. In the field of apologetics he wrote relatively little, despite the painful controversies in which the Mathers found themselves from time to time;[1] and in the field of systematic theology, significantly, nothing, unless we count the unpublished eschatological works.

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[1] This is the figure given by T. J. Holmes in Cotton Mather: a Bibliography of His Works, I (Cambridge, Mass., 1940), ix ff. Holmes notes the existence of another twenty-four fragmentary pieces, and says that of his total number, twenty-eight of the published works and ten of the manuscripts have disappeared.

One factor which has been insufficiently noted by Mather's critics, and which has led them to develop a distorted view of his nature, is that one cannot take his measure simply through the study of his works in one or several of these literary types. Some _genres_ automatically draw out of Mather his weakest side; others are by nature so refractive that they make even his best side seem unhealthy; and still others almost invariably display him at his best. The _Diary_, for example, is the work most employed by Mather's biographers, and the one which has accounted for some of the worst blows to his reputation. This is surely the most subjective of media -- especially when used by a Puritan physician of the soul such as Richard Rogers, the Mathers, or Brainerd, rather than by a literal-minded laymen like Sewall -- and as such it inevitably leaves the impression of morbid egocentricity. Chandler Robbins comments that if the stream of consciousness of any of Mather's critics were set down as accurately as Mather's was, it would appear just as vain and ridiculous.[2] The strange thing about the

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[1] Those which do exist are mostly early works; these are in reaction to Quakerism, Rome, and anti-Puritan Anglicanism. A few later writings deal vigorously with the growth of Arianism, rationalism, and Deism. The relative sparseness of Mather's production in this line shows the essentially irenic character of his pietism, despite his reputation for a hot temper.

[2] C. Robbins, _A History of the Second Church_ (Boston, 1852), p. 63.

Diary, of course, is Mather's ingenuousness in failing to detect, or at least to censor, his own questionable motives, so that he casually reveals what other men would be at pains to conceal, "an immense vanity and an almost shattering discrepancy between the motive we can see and the motive he claims."[1] But the egoism, the morbidity and the hothouse atmosphere of the work are quite typical of the Puritan diary, which was a form of private confessional. The fact is that any Puritan diary by a minister will drive modern readers to distraction. The form catalyzed the dark side of the Puritan character. But its revelations do not prove any diarist more neurotic than we would seem using the same form -- and with the same theology. There may, however, be elements in the theology underlying the diary form that are necessarily pathogenic, and the ensuing study will explore this possibility.[2]

Other literary forms, however, display Mather at his characteristic best. In his sermons he is at his most objective, turned outward in healthy concern for his flock, contemplating God and the scriptures, and endeavoring to translate these into the minds and hearts of his listeners. Only the occasional preciousness of his style, and a lingering virtuoso consciousness, reveal any reflexive sickness. In his historical works the fusion of objective fact with Puritan hagiography infuses a degree of humility in the author, and here he can be vigorous, self-effacing, and extroverted. He is at his best in works which fix his concern and attention upon concrete needs outside himself, and at his worst in those which expose the needs within, or which aim at the display of his immense scholarship to other specialists. It is no accident that the "Biblia Americana" was never published, while the Manuductio ad Ministeriam, aimed at the heart of a current need for the direction of ministerial students, is lean, nervous, and alive in its prose.

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[1] D. Levin, "The Hazing of Cotton Mather," New England Quarterly, XXXVI (1963), 150.

[2] The Diary, which was begun in March of 1681, was kept partly as a tool for self-improvement, partly as a testimony to be given to his children, and very possibly with posterity in mind. Up to 1711 we have only copies made of the original notes, so that the early diaries are, as Wendell says, condensed yearly autobiographies (Wendell, op. cit., p. 48). It is obvious that some entries, such as those having to do with the witchcraft trials, are conscious apologies for Mather's behavior. On the other hand, we are dealing with a scrupulously honest individual in Mather, one who feared the blast of God upon his ministry if he loved or made a lie; and prolonged reading of the Diary has left me much impressed with Mather's honesty in leaving many items on the record which in his later years he clearly felt were immature. I believe that he simply tried to leave an accurate account of his spiritual growth, and succeeded fairly well.

Few previous writers on Mather, with the exception of his bibliographer, Thomas Holmes, give evidence of having read more than a large fraction of his published work. No general treatment of his theology based on the full range of sources has existed up to this point. The present work is based on most of the published Mather canon (omitting only a few works which have no connection with Mather's theology and his views on Christian experience) plus the unpublished "Problema Theologica" and "Tri-Paradisus," which has seemed to the writer an adequate base from which to construct a picture of Mather as a theologian of Christian experience.[1] The reading of Mather's sermonic literature has been a particularly fruitful and fascinating part of this study; and if the ensuing work is guilty of excessive quotation of these sources, it is because we need an anthology of Mather's best strokes in this region to give us the full measure of the man, the quaint but unique richness of his mind and the reality of his pastoral concern.

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[1] Lack of time and the presence of other responsibilities have necessitated a very incomplete use of another important source, the unpublished "Biblia America," a work of around 1,200,000 words (four times the length of the Magnalia), which exists in six volumes of Mather's difficult script in the library of the Massachusetts Historical Society. The work appears to contain much that Mather managed to publish elsewhere -- he seldom failed to find other means of exporting knowledge when one means failed -- and I have only checked through the work cursorily for certain texts which are important theological loci.

CHAPTER II

THE GENERAL STRUCTURE OF MATHER'S THEOLOGY

1. The Experiential Cast of Mather's Thought

The typology of Mather's works in the preceding chapter indicates that his main interest is in literature which is practically useful in the nurture of the spiritual life. Even when he seems to be writing primarily to display his erudition, he does not write systematic theology, but prefers allegorical exegesis of biblical texts interwoven with quotations from patristic, rabbinical, and Puritan sources. He will go to any length to read something spiritually "edifying" out of a text -- something which carries a challenging or comforting application of the doctrines of grace to the believer's life -- but he is wholly uninterested in the intricate probing of the thought-processes of the deity attempted by the system-builders of Reformed orthodoxy. We might conclude that this reduction of theology to the practically useful was an effect of Mather's intercourse with German Pietism, which weighted doctrines according to their value in promoting godliness. But Mather's practical bent antedated his contact with Pietism, and all of his colleagues, including the more theologically-minded Stoddard and Willard, shared this characteristic.[1] Perry Miller has suggested that part of the reason for this trend was the ministers' need for practical remedies for the spiritual decline.

> Of course, all these preachers were loyal to The Westminister Confession, nor did they in any explicit particular renounce the intellectual architecture that formed the first part of this study: they simply stopped talking about it, while concentrating upon getting

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[1] Perry Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), p. 213.

> results. They would not understand what I mean, but actually in this fashion they were becoming Americanized -- all the more speedily because, not obtaining the results they desired, they had to redouble their endeavors.[1]

But the value of this generalization is limited by Miller's characteristic failure to grasp the unity of American pietism with similar movements in Europe.[2] There were plenty of pastors and theologians outside America who showed the same drift toward practical piety toward the end of the seventeenth century. Miller himself elsewhere cites the example of one of Mather's favorite European theologians, Mastricht, who in his _Theoretico-Practica Theologia_ (1699) "puts so much more emphasis upon the _Practica_ than upon the _Theoretico_ as to reverse the entire direction of seventeenth-century theology."[3] But Mastricht alone was not responsible for this 'reversal.' Seventeenth-century Puritanism had been moving in this direction for a long time before Mastricht and Mather; in fact, there had been a strong current of practical pietism in Puritanism from the very beginning. Recent scholarship has increasingly concluded that English Puritanism throughout most of its history can best be understood in terms of its predominating stress on Christian experience, rather than by examining its institutional emphases, as an older school of interpreters did, or dissecting its doctrinal structure, as intellectual historians like Miller have done.[1]

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 214.

[2] This failure is even more visible in Miller's _Jonathan Edwards_ (New York, 1949), which attempts to understand Edwards' 'experimentalism' in Lockean terms and obscures its thorough rootage in the Puritan/Pietist experiential tradition.

[3] Miller, "_The Manuductio ad Ministerium_," in T. J. Holmes, _Cotton Mather: A Bibliography of His Works_, II (Cambridge, Mass., 1940), 632.

Some authorities, in fact, have gone so far as to assert that English Puritanism and continental Pietism are essentially one and the same movement.[2] This interpretation is not without its difficulties. The two movements have different immediate roots, for example: German Pietism traces back through Johann Arndt through the young Luther and behind him to Tauler, while Puritanism probably flows from Bucer and Bullinger through English pastors until it begins to find theological expression in Perkins and a series of later divines, including the Dutch precisionists. It is also true that there is a difference in theological flavor between the movements, since they develop out of two different orthodoxies; this is particularly clear in their differing attitudes toward predestination.[1] Still the two movements are alike in their emphasis on the development of interior godliness, their stress on the importance of initial regeneration, their balancing of a one-sided doctrine of justification by a thrust toward sanctification, and their essential biblicism in contrast to more rational and systematic approaches. They are both ultimately rooted in popular evangelical mysticism of the same species as the Devotio Moderna, penetrating into the orthodox Reformation in Germany and the Rhineland. After the simultaneous appearance of German pre-pietism (Arndt, Comenius, Andreae) and English Puritanism, there was a considerable amount of borrowing, cross-pollination, and symbiosis between the English-Dutch and German forms of Puritanism/Pietism. During the course of the seventeenth century this exchange of genetic material brought the English and German strains so close in their basic practice and devotional attitude that Mather and

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[1] Cf. Jerald Brauer, "The Nature of English Puritanism," *Church History*, XXIII (1954), 99-108; Alan Simpson, *Puritanism in Old and New England* (Chicago, 1955); Geoffrey Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Oxford, 1947). A good review of this trend in Puritan historiography is given in J. Rodney Fulcher's unpublished doctoral dissertation, "Puritan Piety in Early New England" (Princeton University, 1963), in the introductory pages.

[2] This thesis has been most recently defended in a brilliant work by F. E. Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Leiden, 1965). Stoeffler is working on a second volume tracing developments in continental Pietism after Spener, which when completed will be the first full and adequate treatment of this subject in English. Stoeffler contends that when we examine Puritanism and the different national strains of Pietism we find "as much oneness here, as much of an ethos, as we can possibly find within any sizable Christian community." He notes that most Continental writers, unlike American students such as Trinterud and Friedmann, have long followed Lang and Heppe in assuming the unity of these movements (*op. cit.*, p. 8). Ritschl, of course, characterized Pietism as a reassertion of the Medieval *via mystica*; but while there is an important element of truth in this judgment, it utterly fails to see the strong evangelical rootage of Pietism in its classic period (*i. e.*, in Spener and Francke). Troeltsch accepted all modern movements stressing experience as pietistic, including Jansenism, Quietism, Hasidic Judaism, Quakers and other sectarian groups. But it must be noted that evangelical pietism, which is (*contra* Ritschl) firmly and vigorously based on Reformation doctrine, is a wholly different species amid the genus of experiential movements. It is better to limit the term, as Nichols does, to evangelical mysticism in Lutheran, Reformed, and Anglican environments: *vide* James Hastings Nichols, *History of Christianity, 1650-1950* (New York, 1956), p. 81. Dale Weaver Brown, in an excellent and suggestive thesis, notes that Ritschl and others have obscured the evangelical Reformation basis of German Pietism, by confusing the central Pietist stream with variant expressions of radical illuminism on the edge of the movement or in later and decadent forms of it ("The Problem of Subjectivism in Pietism" unpublished doctoral thesis, Northwestern University, 1962 , p. 6 *et passim*). Brown, who gives a full survey of Continental opinion on the origins of Pietism, lists four basic theories of origin: (1) that Pietism is the result of the impact of Reformed thought, and especially Puritanism, on Lutheran piety (Heppe, Lang, Troeltsch); (2) that it is a logical development of Lutheran piety in the Reformation era (Jungst-Stetin); (3) that it is a revival of medieval and monastic piety (Ritschl); and (4) that it is a new form of Anabaptism (most opponents of the movement). There is something to be said for all of these explanations, understood within certain limits; but the first and second are perhaps closest to the truth.

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[1] Klaus Deppermann in Der Hallesche Pietismus und der preussische Staat unter Friedrich III (Göttingen, 1961), p. 177, gives an intriguing list of elements shared by the two movements: stress on the methodical development of individual holiness, oriented to the Law; evidence of good works as a means of assurance of a state of grace; belief in Providence, final perseverence, and striving for high spiritual goals; the ideal of work as the best ascetic means; the use of diaries for spiritual growth; and the fostering of responsibility to God through abolition of private confession. We might add to this the strong drive to produce Erbaungsliteratur shared by both movements -- and the significant affinity for one another's productions in these lines which they shared. James Hastings Nichols, in his History of Christianity, 1650-1950 (New York, 1956), pp. 81-2, notes the presence in both movements of the use of conventicles and prayer meetings as a means of spiritual nurture.

Francke found themselves on identical ground at the outset of the eighteenth century.[1]

It seems true, however, that there was some evolutionary change necessary in that complex of movements and emphases which we call Puritanism, to bring it to this point. There is -- to coin a word -- a gradual pietization of Puritanism during the seventeenth century. It began as a loose collection of movements, all stressing the completion of what was felt to be a half-effected Reformation. The purity which was sought was for some mainly a matter of purging the worship of the English church; for others, a matter of altering the polity; for others, the defense of pure theological 'Calvinism' or Reformed orthodoxy; and for still others, mainly a matter of the transformation of lives among the pastorate and laity.[2] Though called by the same epithet, these vectors were not always mutually compatible; the separatists, for example, were censured by most Puritans for ecclesiastical extremism. On the other hand, a given leader might combine many or all of these concepts of reformation in his own emphasis.

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[1] Cf. Benz, "Pietist and Puritan Sources of Early Protestant World Missions," *Church History*, XX (1951), 51. Besides his childhood training in Arndt and his later contact with Dutch precisionism, the other main genetic factor in Spener's pietism is probably the impact of English devotional writers in German translation (Lewis Bayly, Daniel Dyke, and Richard Baxter) which Spener found in his father's library and used for his early spiritual nurture. The English influence is even more strongly pronounced in Francke, who was fascinated by Puritanism both in its English and American forms. (One of the best recent authorities on Francke, Erich Beyreuther, is clearly mistaken in representing him as pro-Anglican but regarding American Puritanism as "sterile ground;" Beyreuther seems unaware of the Mather-Francke correspondence. *Vide* Beyreuther, *August Hermann Francke und die Anfange der Ökumenischen Bewegung*, [Hamburg-Bergstedt, 1957], p. 111.) Erhard Peschke, in the best available study of Francke's theology, feels that the influx of Puritan and Calvinist ideas in Francke is responsible for an occasional harsh and un-Lutheran resonance in his thought: *vide* Peschke, *Studien zur Theologie August Hermann Franckes*, I (Berlin, 1964), 16.

[2] The typology here is a variation on that of Lang; cf. Stoeffler; *op. cit.*, p. 27.

Logically, it is possible to combine all of them under the ideal of 'precision,' as does the Dutch Puritan Pietist Gisbert Voetius: "We define 'precision' as the exact or perfect human action conforming to the law of God as taught by God."[1] This definition of the Puritan ideal, which fundamentally assumes the validity of a Zwinglian biblicistic legalism and probably traces back to that source historically, can be applied equally well to purity of doctrine, worship, polity, and practical piety. In seventeenth-century English Puritanism, however, historical events and conditions interacted to form a distillation-system which gradually subsumed the more external and legalistic elements, leaving a predominant stress on inner piety by the end of the seventeenth century. The condition of restraint and powerlessness in which Puritanism developed at its outset was more favorable to the growth of the strain emphasizing internal piety than to any of the others. After the Revolution, when the reformers finally had a free rein to purify the English church, the fissiparation of the reforming parties gradually led men to suspect that the New Testament did not speak with 'precision' about polity, methods of worship, and even some high strains of doctrinal orthodoxy. But the two things that it did seem to stress loudly and clearly were faith and repentance: the Reformed doctrine of God's grace in salvation, and the reformation of the lives of believers. Thus, as later Puritans such as Baxter and Mather might put it, English Puritanism was hammered against the template of scripture by the blows of history, and those elements within it which were not incontestably demonstrable among Christian men of good will were gradually either beaten off, or quietly bent into the background of belief. By the last decades of the century men of the caliber of Baxter, and those with whom Increase Mather labored in the formation of the United Brethren, were striving toward union on doctrinal bases using much the same criteria that Spener devised for the testing of credenda: the overwhelming biblical clarity of a doctrine, and its vital necessity for the nurture of piety.[1]

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[1] Gisbert Voetius, "Selectae Disputationes Theologicae," in Reformed Dogmatics, ed. and trans. by John W. Beardslee, III (New York, 1965), 317.

In this evolutionary process, however, the pietistic strain of Puritanism was always the strongest, so it is no surprise that it was fittest to survive in the seventeenth century.[2] For we must remember that while Puritanism 'surfaces' in history in the writings of a few theological systematists, its main strength lay from the beginning among a host of practicing pastors, beginning in the last decades of the sixteenth century with men like Richard Greenham, Richard Rogers, and John Dod, who formulated the details of Puritan piety in their local parishes.[3] William Perkins took this popular biblicism and forged it into union with the elements of Calvinist scholastic orthodoxy, and from him it passed to

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[1] For an analysis of Spener's approach, vide Dale Weaver Brown, op. cit., p. 183.

[2] Stoeffler feels that there is an evolution within Puritanism from a piety of 'godliness' or 'preciseness' based on legal casuistry (Greenham, Rogers, Perkins, Dod, Downame, Bayly, Bolton), to a piety of 'holiness' based on the transformation of the heart, on 'being' rather than 'doing', in the radical Puritan sects during the Revolutionary period. He contends that in the latter development there was more stress on holy exercises such as fasting, meditation, and prayer, rather than on behavioral externals. An 'intuitive biblicism' is supposed to have supplanted the old 'logical biblicism,' and the elements of God's grace and mercy are thought to have been more emphasized in later Puritans influenced by the left-wing mystics, such as Jeremiah Burroughs, Thomas Goodwin, Baxter, and Bunyan. (Stoeffler, op. cit., pp. 78-101). This is an interesting thesis, but it underestimates the degree of intuitive or mystical pietism already present in the founders of the Puritan movement. And most readers will find an uncomfortable amount of legal precisionism left over in most Puritans and Pietists throughout the seventeenth century, except in such extraordinary figures as Sibbes and Spener. The devotional manuals published by Puritans before 1640 contained just as much emphasis on 'holy exercises' and mystical communion with God as the writings of the Revolutionary period; actually the antinomians and enthusiasts of Cromwell's period stressed working at the means of grace much less than the earlier Puritans.

[3] Stoeffler, op. cit., p. 28.

Ames and the other Puritan or Precisionist theologians.[1] But even in Perkins, theology is defined not as a theoretical discipline, but as *scientia beate vivendi in aeternum*;[2] and Ames defines it as *doctrina Deo vivendi*, and holds that faith is *acquiescientia cordis in Deo*.[3] Ames had disturbed and elivened the Dutch theological scene in the 1620's by the practicality of his theological approach and his introduction of a biblical casuistry of daily conduct into the theological curriculum.[4] Considering, then, the pastoral origins of English Puritanism and the continuing freight of practical theology even in its systematisers, it is not surprising that Mather, who was by calling not a theologian but a pastor and evangelist, would revert to the pure practicality of the original Puritanism, subject as he was to an undeniable pull toward what was pastorally marketable, what was useful for the edification of his people.[5]

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[1] H. Bornkamm, in *Mystik, Spiritualismus und die Anfange des Pietismus im Luthertum* (Giessen, 1926), p. 16, notes the same fusion of mystical piety and Lutheran scholastic orthodoxy in the formation of German Pietism.

[2] Stoeffler, *op. cit.*, pp. 134-7.

[3] Hugo Visscher, "William Ames, His Life and Works," in *William Ames*, ed. and trans. by Douglas Horton (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), p. 70.

[4] Matthew Nethenus, "Introductory Preface," in *William Ames* ed. and trans. by Douglas Horton (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), pp. 14-15.

[5] Bronkema and others have supposed that the practical flavor of Puritanism comes from some special bias in the British national character (*vide* R. Bronkema, *The Essence of Puritanism* Goes, Holland, 1929 , pp. 3, 17). But Puritan legal precision really springs from a Zwinglian stream on the continent, and the Dutch and German pietists were just as susceptible to the experiential approach to theology as the English. It is much more satisfactory to explain all of these experiential movements as basic products of grass-roots pastoral concern, later articulated by theologians produced by that pastoring. There are times when intellectuals change history of their leadership in expressing ideas; but there are many other occasions when they merely express the change that itself confirms. It may be, incidentally, that there will always be a discernible difference between the theology produced by pastors and that which is created by pure scholars. Obviously both are needed, as counterbalances to one another. Luther remarked that to be a theologian a man must feed the flock of God for a hundred years. But when he has finished with that, he is liable not

Mather's 'true American Pietism,' however, was not radical enough to discard all the historic Puritan structural and intellectual distinctives for sheer invertebrate indulgence in Christian experience. Mather was a progressive, but he was also part of a dynasty which had virtually built New England Congregationalism, and was therefore by inheritance the caretaker of its tradition. And American Puritanism was from the beginning more conservative than its seventeenth century equivalent in England, where certain historical catalysts speeded up the process of distillation toward a more freely structured pietism. Mather can go so far as to say in 1717 that all institutions within the church are valuable only as they assist the development of piety, and with amazing prescience can advise missionaries to propagate only the basic elements of the gospel and not "the little peculiarities of a party."[1] And yet he will still build a case in 1726 for the New England Way as the structure which is most truly biblical and hence best suited to nurture Christian experience.[2] He is still legalistic enough to preserve all the Puritan behavioral precision, and to complain against the introduction of "uninstituted worship" as a violation of "the religion of the second commandment" until the end of his life.[3] How he can maintain such continuing stress on Puritan peculiarities and still propose ecumenical union

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to talk about anything which is not immediately relevant to sheep; and this gravitation toward what is existentially useful to the pastor constantly threatens to pull Puritan theology out of shape.

[1] C. Mather, Malachi (Boston, 1717), pp. 59-62

[2] C. Mather, Ratio Disciplinae (Boston, 1726), p. 194. In The Stone Cut Out of the Mountain (Boston, 1716), p. 11, in the midst of a strongly worded call to ecumenical unity on the basis of practical piety, Mather still intrudes the notion that the congregational system of free local churches with pastors chosen by the congregation is essential to the highest development of true piety.

[3] C. Mather, Parentator (Boston, 1726), pp. 232-3. Suspiria Vinctorum (Boston, 1726), p. 20, mentions "Uninstituted worship" as one of the expressions of a decay of inner piety among Protestants.

with all other Christian parties on the basis of vital piety and a very minimal creed, is hard to comprehend, unless we suppose that there was some continuing inconsistency between Mather the progressive and Mather the conservative. Parts of his mind were moving faster than others, but he does not seem to have been fully aware of this fact.

2. Mather's Theology and Enlightenment Rationalism

The image of Mather obtained by superimposing his liberal pietism upon his Puritan conservatism is further complicated by another quality which has been predicated of him in this century: rationalism. A number of authorities, most of them rather friendly to Mather in their own way, have sought to demonstrate that he was a theological innovator who "dabbled in deism."[1] This notion apparently originates in I. W. Riley's American Philosophy, the Early Schools (1907). Riley's analysis is worth examining in detail, since it has misdirected almost all later commentators on Mather. Riley defines 'Deism' in a series of four points: (1) the doctrine that the Deity is the self-sufficient cause of all things, that he does not rule providentially and does not interfere with the natural order; (2) the idea that God wills the good of being in general; (3) the notion that the world declares God's glory, and that reason can discern God's glory in the structure of the world; (4) the notions that God and man alike are rational, and that man has free will and is perfectible. With considerable uneasiness and vacillation, Riley seeks to establish that "veritable deistic principles were promulgated by Cotton Mather in 1702,"[1] and definitely stated in The Christian Philosopher (1721).[2] He is somewhat bewildered by evidence in Mather which contradicts this conclusion, though he is apparently not fully acquainted with Mather's distaste for his first point, very qualified acceptance of the second and third, and rejection of all but the first clause of his fourth point. He notes that Mather's attitude seemed "at the first, that of a sheer obscurantist, violently opposed to the pursuits of reason;" notes that he struggled between his "dislike of discursive reasoning" and his "inconsistent appeal to reason itself;" and supposes that after a prolonged inner struggle Mather came over into the camp of rationalistic deism, or at least moved substantially in this direction. He does remark upon Mather's vigorous resistance to most rationalistic literature and admits that The Christian Philosopher was intended as an antidote to it. Yet he persists in making Mather a transitional figure toward Deism because Mather revels in the beauty of nature, and radiates a joy and optimism in the vision of God's glory in the universe which he feels is alien to Puritan Calvinism.[3] But Mather's delight in the harmony and order of the world does not differ from that of the psalmists, except that it operates with scientific information;[1] and Riley's view of the Puritan appreciation of nature seems to be an untenable stereotype retained from the nineteenth century.

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[1] Bridenbaugh, Cities in the Wilderness (New York, 1938), p. 289; cf. O. Beall and R. Shryock, Cotton Mather, First Significant Figure in American Medicine (Baltimore, 1954), p. 34; K. B. Murdock, "Cotton Mather," DAB, XII (New York, 1933), 387; K. B. Murdock, Ed., Selections from Cotton Mather (New York, 1926), "Introduction".

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[1] I. W. Riley, American Philosophy, the Early Schools (New York, 1907), pp. 16-17. Apparently Riley is referring to Reasonable Religion, published in Boston in 1700, not 1702. Riley's footnote refers erroneously to F. E. Sanborn's "Jonathan Edwards and the Puritanic Philosophy," Journal of Speculative Philosophy, XVII, 403; the article does not mention Deism in Mather.

[2] These and earlier physico-theological writings of Mather were related to a series of such works published in England in the late seventeenth century, beginning with Robert Boyle's Usefulness of Experimental Natural Philosophy (Oxford, 1663) and The Christian Virtuoso (London, 1672). For The Christian Philosopher, Mather relied on Nehemiah Grew's Cosmologia Sacra (London, 1701), George Cheyne's Philosophical Principles of Natural Religion (London, 1705), and William Derham's Physico-Theology (London, 1713). Vide Theodore Hornberger, "Mather's Christian Philosopher," in T. J. Holmes, Cotton Mather: A Bibliography of His Works, I (Cambridge, Mass., 1940), 134.

[3] I. W. Riley, op. cit., pp. 16, 41, 43-4, 195-8, 209, 243, 489.

After Riley, the next writer to seek independently to establish Mather's Deism is Theodore Hornberger, who accepts most of Riley's presuppositions and simply seeks to show that Mather's rationalism began even earlier than Riley thought, with the publication of The Wonderful Works of God (1690) and Winter Meditations (1693).[2] After establishing his case, Hornberger is troubled by the same inconsistencies noted by Riley, and he says of Mather,

> From the very beginning of his career, his attitude towards the external world is curiously confused. On the one hand, he is notorious for his apparently consistent belief in a providential order of nature, in which God was particularly near and attentive to Cotton Mather and to New England . . . On the other hand, Cotton Mather was able frequently to summon up ecstatic praise for the evidence of God in the design, the harmony, and the order of the universe . . . He placed sufficient emphasis upon harmony and order to suggest that he did believe, on occasion, in a truly scientific universe, in which events invariably proceed from natural causes. His mind, like many another in the age of transition in which he lived, was unconsciously vacillating between two points of view. On the whole, the providential or theological side won out, but the scientific side has perhaps been underestimated.[3]

Ironically, these observations only make sense if one takes the position of Deism, or naturalistic rationalism, that the natural order governed by laws of nature and the providence of God are irreconcilable. But Mather is consistently non-Deistic in this respect. He has not moved an iota from the position of Reformed orthodoxy in holding to the paradoxical concurrence of first and second causes in God's providence.[1] His double view of this matter is not the inconsistency of a mind in transition but simply the biblical tension of an approach which refuses to rationalize antinomies.

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[1] Peter Gay, an authority on eighteenth century rationalism (cf. The Enlightenment: An Interpretation [New York, 1966]), agrees that Mather's use of natural theology was thoroughly orthodox and consistent both with Calvin and the psalmists; vide Gay, A Loss of Mastery (Berkeley, 1966), pp. 84-86.

[2] Theodore Hornberger, "The Date, the Source, and the Significance of Cotton Mather's Interest in Science," American Literature, VI (1935), 413-14.

[3] Ibid., pp. 419-20.

A much more sophisticated restatement and development of these interpretations is given by Perry Miller. Miller is convinced that Mather's emphasis on Christian activism in the Bonifacius, and his handling of reason in a number of works, are supportive of one another, and that these are direct kin to the later rationalist moralism of men like Benjamin Franklin. Miller finds a definite change in Mather's attitude toward reason in Reasonable Religion (1700), which he alleges is friendlier to the developing Enlightenment. While he acknowledges that Mather's statements remain 'officially' orthodox throughout his life, and mentions his complaints against the reigning English theology, Miller insists that Mather really came over to rationalist ground himself in struggling against the Enlightenment, gradually putting more confidence in reason, and weakening in his sense of sin. Miller acknowledges that in later life Mather remained contemptuous of certain uses of reason, in rhetoric, logic, and metaphysics; but he maintains that Mather later came to trust in reason defined as 'common sense,' even apart from the illumination of the Holy Spirit, and he suggests that Mather's pietism led him into this rationalist approach. This analysis thus connects Mather to the men who resisted the subsequent awakening, rather than to its proponents.[2] As Miller puts it,

> In the Manuductio . . . the Puritan manual of pastoral care first

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[1] Vide Mather's Manuductio ad Ministerium (Boston, 1726), pp. 51-2, 261; and cf. H. Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, trans. by G. T. Thomson, rev. and ed. by Ernst Bizer (London, 1950), pp. 258-61.

[2] Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), pp. 517-36, 478.

> shows signs of disintegration: the element of Humanism originally combined with the theology is beginning to crowd it out, in spite of Mather's care for orthodoxy. His pronouncements show how far he had travelled with that segment of Puritanism that was journeying toward Arminianism, morality, and Unitarianism, that segment of which Benjamin Franklin himself was an offshoot, and against which Jonathan Edwards fought in his endeavor to revivify the seventeenth-century spirit.[1]

This is a plausible thesis at first reading, but it loses force against the background of Mather's total work. Miller himself had read the essential documents enough to realize the difficulties in his own interpretation, especially Mather's continued resistance and repudiation of the movement he is accused of aiding. But Miller is forced to discount these expressions as lip-service to orthodoxy, because he does not conceive of the existence of a position which is neither pure orthodox reaction nor rationalism, nor something in transit between these two poles. He does not, in short, allow for the fact that there might exist a *tertium quid*, a *Christian* evangelical activism with a very controlled use of reason. There is the same conceptual defect here that we encounter occasionally in popular reactionary political theory, which assumes that any deviation from *laissez-faire* capitalism must be 'on the way to Communism.' This thesis contends that Mather, the continental Pietists, and the leaders of the Great Awakening represent such a third force, a movement which was essentially opposed both to orthodox and Enlightenment rationalism.[2]

While Mather's relationship to orthodoxy was somewhat more complex, we can easily document the fact that his rejection of Enlightenment was unambiguous. Around August of 1699, Mather became disturbed at the reported incursions of rationalism in England,[1] and wrote a pastoral letter warning English nonconformists of "*Socinian Haeresies* and . . . *Atheistical Deism* . . . And, alas, the strange care taken to fabricate a *Christian Religion* without a *Christ*, or the most Vital parts of *Christianity*."[2] At this point, the peril was still overseas: in his election sermon for 1700, Mather attacked "A Nation full of Preachers, that will contrive to make Harangues upon Moral Vertues, but banish Christ," and rejoiced that there was not a single Socinian, nor even an Arminian, in New England.[3] Later in the same year he complained that

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[1] P. Miller, "The Manuductio ad Ministerium," in T. J. Holmes, *Cotton Mather: A Bibliography of His Works*, II (Cambridge, Mass., 1940), 634-5.

[2] I have separated the examination of Perry Miller's attribution of rationalism to Mather from his correlative attack on Mather's supposed moralism. For discussion of the latter, *vide infra*, pp. 297-307, under the treatment of Mather's ethics.

> There seems to be a Conspiracy in much of the *English Nation*, to fabricate a *Christian Religion* . . . without a *Christ*; not only are those *Deists* prodigiously multiplied, who are infinitely worse than *Mohametans*, and *Socinians*, which are but a sort of *Baptized Mohametans* . . . but also, if you search the Sermons and the Writings of the *Clergy*, you shall often find, Nomen Christi non est ibi, it may be there is not Christ, *name* or *Thing*, in more than *Seven Sermons* together: And there are Books Written, to prove, *That there is nothing requisite unto a Good Christian, or a Church Member, but only to Believe That Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah*; whereas *that* Thing is many times over Confessed and Asserted even in the *Alcoran of Mohamed*.[4]

But in June of 1702 Mather was concerned that the depravation of "the glorious Doctrines of Grace" in the Reformed churches of Europe would contaminate the younger clergy of New England, who were being "poisoned by vile *Pelagian* Books, that from beyond-sea, are vended among us."[5] The books were apparently Arminian tracts being distributed by what Mather called the "Society for the Molestation of the Gospel in foreign Parts" (the Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel),[1] an organization Mather never ceased to abominate because of its proselytizing in New England and its efforts to "obtrude a very defective Christianity on the nation."[2] Mather was also concerned at this point about the unguarded recommendation of this type of literature to ministerial students at Harvard.[3] In 1703 Mather lamented the common and open utterance in England of "Arian, Socinian, deistical blasphemies," and it is evidently still English Nonconformism which concerned him when he complained in 1706 of "a very Numerous party of men . . . who own no Grace necessary to bring a Sinner into a State of Salvation, but only that which they call Moral Grace or Moral Suasion, which amounts to no more than a Rational Proposal of our Duty, To turn from Sin to God in Christ, with Reasonable Considerations, to Excite men to the doing of this their duty."[4] Again in 1706 he notes that "the Pelagian Opinions being introduced in the English Nation have introduced an horrid Corruption of Manners with them; That no men show less of a Free-will toward Spiritual Good, than the men who have been the great Assertors, and Admirers, of man's Free-will."[5] In the same year he published his Man of God Furnished to protect New England from falling prey to seven heresies, among them Socinianism and Pelagianism.[6]

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[1] C. Mather, *Diary*, I (New York, 1957), 312 (August, 1699).

[2] C. Mather, *A Letter of Advice to the Churches* (London, 1701), pp. 11-12. Since John Toland's *Christianity Not Mysterious*, the work which popularized Deism in English circles, was published in 1696 in London, Mather was quite prompt, and severely sensitive, in his opposition to the movement.

[3] C. Mather, *A Pillar of Gratitude* (Boston, 1700), pp. 21, 24.

[4] C. Mather, *American Tears upon the Ruins of the Greek Churches* (Boston, 1701), p. 46. The concluding reference, of course, is to Locke's theory of the minimal Christian confession.

[5] C. Mather, *Diary*, I (New York, 1957), 429 (May, 1702).

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[1] Ibid., II, 416.

[2] Ibid., 60; cf. pp. 64, 120, 327, 412, 692, 702, 797.

[3] C. Mather, The Marrow of the Gospel (Boston, 1727), p. 25.

[4] C. Mather, Free-Grace (Boston, 1706), p. 23.

[5] C. Mather, A Conquest over the Grand Excuse (Boston, 1706), p. 21.

[6] C. Mather, The Man of God Furnished (Boston, 1708); cf. C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 572 (October, 1706).

The second decade of the eighteenth century found Mather complaining to John Maxwell, at the University of Glasgow, of the "Tarantula with which this Age of Infidelity is poysened."[1] Mather was horrified to find that he himself could be bitten:

> My learned Friend Whiston (from whom I have this week received an Account of his Proceedings,) is likely to raise a prodigious Dust in the world; by reviving the Arian Opinions. He revives them with more than ordinary Advantages, and I am likely to have my own Mind shock'd with more than ordinary Temptations on this Occasion. Wherefore, I cry most ardently unto the glorious Lord, that He would graciously enlighten me; cause me to take up right Thoughts of my dear Jesus, and of His Holy Spirit; lead me into all Truth, and keep me from Error, and show my my Duty, and never leave me to hurt any Interest of His Kingdome in the World.[2]

Within the week Mather had determined to become a champion of Trinitarianism against his friend,[3] and a year and a half later he was busy writing "an Antidote against the wretched Poison, wherewith Whiston is endeavouring to corrupt the Church of God; and particularly to defend the Students in our Colledge from the Corruption."[4] This was not simply a matter of Mather espousing his own part in a pet cause celebre; a little later we find him endeavoring to enlist the blind but brilliant church historian at the University of Glasgow, William Jameson, in attacking Whiston.[5] Mather was sufficiently intelligent to be susceptible to Whiston's arguments, but also suspicious enough of his own reason and that of other learned men so that he remained anchored in a traditional, and supra-rational, scheme of

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[1] C. Mather, A Letter to the University of Glasgow (Boston, 1710), p. 11

[2] C. Mather, Diary, II (New York, 1957), 106 (September, 1711).

[3] Ibid., 107, 109 (September, 1711).

[4] C. Mather, Things to be More Thought Upon (Boston, 1713); cf. C. Mather, Diary, II (New York, 1957), 186 (March, 1713).

[5] C. Mather, Diary, II (New York, 1957), 205 (May, 1713).

Christian doctrine.

If Mather were to move away from the anti-rationalist and anti-moralist position he had developed up to this point, it would necessarily be in that low period for his own interests and those of Puritanism, the 1720's, after his Christian Philosopher was published (1721). But by far the most numerous and most vigorous protests against rationalism which he composed were written in this period. The aftermath of Salter's Hall prompted Mather to draw the line quite firmly at the boundary of his pietist ecumenism:

> It surprizes [New England Congregationalists] to see that the Vomit of a Valentinus . . . spued out . . . in the English tongue, should be so greedily imbibed by Multitudes, who are loth to herd with the grosser Arians
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> . . . .
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> They who dwell in the wilderness, are afraid at the Tokens . . . that a fearful Decay of real and vital Religion, and of Love to a Glorious Jesus, may have introduced that easy Disposition . . . And it astonishes them to see what Stars the Tail of the Dragon has reached in this Apostasy. They mightily approve and pursue the Design of making the Terms of Communion to be no other than the Terms of Salvation; and of all good Men coming professedly and explicitly on the Basis of that Piety, on which all the Children of God are indeed forever united. But yet . . . they are at a loss how they shall suppose the Terms of Salvation duly complied withal, where ONE GOD in THREE PERSONS is not prayed unto; and where a Baptism into the Name of ONE GOD, and of Two Creatures, is made the Badge of Christianity: or how they shall suppose, that Men come up to that PIETY, which will oblige us to acknowledge them as our Brethren in CHRIST, while they do not acknowledge any CHRIST, but a Son of God who is not One in Essence with His Father, but one infinitely inferiour to the most High God; infinitely different from him, whose Name alone is JEHOVAH.
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> . . . .
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> They cannot comprehend, what our Brethren mean, when they require no Confession of Faith . . . other than what they know all the Hereticks upon the face of the earth, as well as the Socinians, will readily come into.[1]

In 1724 he notes the concern of his father over Arian intrusions into the

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[1] C. Mather, "A Letter to Thomas Bradbury," in Thomas Bradbury, The Necessity of Contending for Revealed Religion (Boston, 1720), pp. xx-xxii.

United Brethren,[1] and there is no doubt that the two Mathers stabilized one another in the face of the growing rationalism of English theology.[2] Two years later in the Manuductio ad Ministerium (1726) he advises ministerial students against "a Set of Books which of late Years have brought in a Fashionable Divinity."[3] It might be supposed that Mather's reaction is against a set of doctrines which are unfashionable and unorthodox in Boston at the moment, rather than rationalism as a theological method. But in another late work he exposes the root of the problem with the new divinity:

> What ails the Baptized Enemies of our Faith and of our God, that they will not let us quietly enjoy our BAPTISM: Foolishly pretending their Idaea's; and their Idaea's, and it is, forsooth, an Age of Idaea's; and they have no Idaea of such a Trinity! -- As if nothing were to be received upon a Divine Revelation, concerning an Incomprehensible GOD, but what a sinful and a shallow Mortal will please to say, he has an Idaea of . . . An Idaea of Three Persons in one GOD, is altogether as easy to be comprehended, as an Idaea of an INFINITE or an ETERNAL Being.[4]

In Mather's later years, he was thus a vigorous opponent of English Unitarianism. In 1721, he speaks of his being at considerable expense in diffusing a tract on the Godhead of Christ throughout New England.[5] In 1725 he writes to Bradbury of his "Insupportable Grief" at the "pretended Irenicums" of the United Brethren in England, which "do purposely and perpetually Leave out the Faith of our Lords Eternal Deity, when they pretend unto an Enumeration of our Fundamental Articles."[1] In one of the last letters he wrote before his death, to Thomas Prince, he expressed himself on the liberalizing tendencies of Isaac Watts, whose poetry and piety he had formerly held in the highest admiration:

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[1] C. Mather, Parentator (Boston, 1724), p. 201.

[2] Increase Mather himself had been concerned about rationalism and the maligning of the person and work of Christ as early as 1686, in The Mystery of Christ (Boston, 1686), "Foreword" and p. 46; and had joined his son's attack on Deism in A Discourse Proving That the Christian Religion is the Only True Religion (Boston, 1702).

[3] C. Mather, Manuductio ad Ministerium (Boston, 1726), pp. 97-8.

[4] C. Mather, Baptismal Piety (Boston, 1727), p. 9.

[5] C. Mather, Diary, II (New York, 1957), 625-6 (June, 1721).

> I take him, to be a very Disqualified person, for the Managing of the Vast Subject he has undertaken; He is not only too shallow for it; but also Led away with a Spurious and Criminal Charity, for those Abominable IDOLATERS, the Arians . . . For my own part, I Look on the part which our Brethren . . . have taken in Countenancing the Conspiracy to dethrone and degrade and ungod the Eternal SON of GOD, as having a deep share in preparing the world for that Catastrophe, which my, Diluvium Ignis warns you of . . . As for you, My Son, . . . I will say one Thing to you. Take heed unto your Spirit. The Candour, or Humour, in the Spirit of Our Friend on the other side the water, has betray'd him into a most mischievous Treachery to the Faith of the Gospel and unhappy Disservice to the Best Cause in the world. I highly approve and admire the Goodness of your Spirit, and the Equanimity with which you Look upon Displeasing Things. But yett, watch over it, Lest you admitt of an Indolence, where an Holy Zeal shall be called for; and where a John himself would be a Boanerges, with zealous Testimonies . . .[2]

Since we shall see much in the remainder of the present work which reveals the growth of Mather's charity, tolerance, and 'catholic spirit,' it is well to keep in mind the fact that there were distinct limits to this, and a line beyond which he would not move in accommodating to differing views.

One of the strongest anti-Enlightenment features of Cotton Mather's work, which has escaped the notice of any of his commentators, is the Christocentric thrust of his preaching. This was a heritage from Increase Mather, who told his son to fill his sermons, not with his own learning or moral precepts, but with Christ, if he wanted "His Holy SPIRIT Powerfully and Marvellously Breathing" in his ministry."[3] Mather repeatedly emphasized his father's counsel to ministerial candidates, most eloquently perhaps in the supposedly rationalistic *Manuductio*.

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[1] Ibid., 796-7.

[2] Ibid., 816-17.

[3] C. Mather, Parentator (Boston, 1724), p. 177.

> Among all the Subjects, with which you *Feed* the People of GOD, I beseech you, Let not the true *Bread of Life* be forgotten; but exhibit as much as you can of a Glorious CHRIST unto them: Yea, Let the *Motto* upon your whole Ministry, be, CHRIST IS ALL. It has been among the *Grievous Things*, which I have seen in the Days of my Pilgrimage, that not only in some of the most celebrated *Sermons*, which we have seen published on the most Illustrious and Memorable Occasions, a CHRIST is . . . not so much as *once* mentioned; but also some of your Great Men have it related of them as an Instance of their *Wisdom*, that they gave it as their Advice unto Ministers, *That they should not Preach much about the Person of CHRIST*. I have thought, Would A blessed PAUL have *uttered* such a Word! A PAUL, who said, *I determined to know nothing among you, save JESUS CHRIST, and Him Crucified*. It is reported by some Travellers, That in the *Mahometan Moschs*, there are sometimes *whole Sermons* on the Glories of a JESUS. And shall they who call themselves *Christians*, and would be honoured as *Ministers of the Christian Religion*, preach as if they were *ashamed* of making the *Glories* of a JESUS, the *Subject* of their *Sermons*; and so rarely introduce Him, as if it were an *Indecent Stoup* to speak of Him! GOD forbid! I make no Doubt of it, That the almost Epidemical Extinction of True *Christianity*, or what is little short of it, in the Nations that profess it, is very much owing to the inexcusable *Impiety* of overlooking a Glorious CHRIST, so much in the Empty *Harangues*, which often pass for *Sermons*.[1]

It is significant that Mather here recognizes the spiritual decline to be a condition afflicting not only New England but the entire world, and diagnoses Arian rationalism as one of its causes.[2] Mather does not recommend a vague emotional devotion to the human Jesus after the fashion of a later and decadent European Pietism. He calls for sharp theological definition of the Savior's person and work as presented in scripture and the intellectual structure of Reformed doctrine:

> What I wish for and urge to, is This; That your *Knowledge of the Mystery of CHRIST*, may Conspicuously shine in your *Sermons*; and that it may be esteemed by you, as a Matchless *Grace given* you, if you may *Preach the Unsearchable Riches of CHRIST* unto the *WORLD*. The *Heavens do Praise that Wonder*; the *Angels* in the *Heavens* are swallowed up in the Praises of that *Wondrous ONE*! Be, like *Them*,

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[1] C. Mather, *Manufuctio ad Ministerium* (Boston, 1726), pp. 93-4.

[2] Cf. C. Mather, *The Minister* (Boston, 1722), p. 28.

> never so much in your Element, as when the *Person*, the *Offices*, the *Benefits*, the *Example*, the *Abasement*, and *Advancement* of a Glorious CHRIST, are the *Subjects* of your *Sermons* . . . In every *Article* of the *Treatises* which you bring into the *Assemblies of Zion*, ponder upon This; What *Aspect* a Glorious CHRIST has upon the *Truth* now before you, and let your Hearers be made sensible of it . . . If you Preach on the *Evil of Sin*, and the *Misery* Man fallen by *Sin*, still carry your Hearers to their mighty and only SAVIOUR: When you Preach on the *Duties* of a *Godly*, and *Sober*, and *Righteous Life*, still carry your Hearers to their SAVIOUR, as not only affording a *Pattern* for all those things, but also as Offering to *live*, and act, and work in them, as a *Principle of Life*, by which alone they can live unto GOD.[1]

This is not only totally removed from the contemporary English rationalism; it is a goal which is more Christologically centered, and less rationalistic, than much Puritan preaching before Mather.[2]

Along with this Christocentric stress, Mather preserved throughout his life the rest of the distinctive emphases of Reformed orthodoxy. In 1702, Mather drafted for the General Convention of Ministers at Boston a comprehensive defense of Calvinistic orthodoxy, issued as an attack on

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[1] C. Mather, *Manuductio ad Ministerium* (Boston, 1726), pp. 93-4. Although Mather's Christocentrism was especially pronounced after Salter's Hall, when English Arianism became acutely visible, it was present at the very beginning of his preaching career and continued to pervade his work in this medium, as the dominant principle of his exegesis of scripture: "The *Name* of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, in the Oracles of the Sacred Scripture, is, the *Face of God*; and in that one Hint you have a Golden Key, to open a thousand passages . . ." (*Meat Out of the Eater* Boston, 1703 , p. 81). A number of Mather's published sermons are devoted entirely to the person and work of Christ, including "The Old Man's Honor," in *Addresses to Old Men* . . . (Boston, 1690); *Thaumatographia Christiana* (Boston, 1701); *A Servant of the Lord* (Boston, 1704); *Parental Wishes and Charges* (Boston, 1705); *Hades Look'd Into* (Boston, 1717); *An Heavenly Life* (Boston, 1719); *A Vision in the Temple* (Boston, 1721); *The True Riches* (Boston, 1724); *Deus Nobiscum* (Boston, 1725), in which Mather demonstrates the insufficiency of natural theology without the revelation of Christ; *Edulcorator* (Boston, 1725); and *The Marrow of the Gospel* (Boston, 1727).

[2] The same Christocentric thrust is quite evident in the early and classical periods of German Pietism, and especially in Francke. Cf. Johann Arndt, *Of True Christianity*, trans. A. W. Boehm (Second English Edition, London, 1720), iv; Erhard Peschke, *Studien zur Theologie August Hermann Franckes*, I (Berlin, 1964), 24-5; Erich Beyreuther, *Der Geschictliche Auftrag des Pietismus in der Gegenwart* (Stuttgart, 1963), pp. 24-4.

English Arminianism and citing the Thirty-Nine Articles against this, asserting man's total depravity through original sin, unconditional election by God's soverign mercy, the effectual calling of the elect through irrestible grace, the bondage of the unregenerate will, and justification by faith through the imputation of Christ's righteousness.[1] Mather's two sermons on Free-Grace (1706) are a vigorous assertion of the value of the doctrine of election for practical piety, for comforting believers and breaking the back of their resistance to the divine Lordship.

> Indeed the Doctrine of PREDESTINATION hath its Mysteries, its Abtruse Difficulties, and Soaring Sublimities. But for men to pretend therefore, that it should be Silenced and Smothered & Shut out of Sermons, is for them to be . . . more Nice than Wise, more Cautious than they need to be; and there is usually, A Snake in the Grass, when such a Doctrine of Godliness is much hissed at. We find, the Doctrine of PREDESTINATION Proposed by our Lord, and His Apostles, with a very frequent Inculcation; We find, that it hath a wondrous Tendency to the Edification of the Faithful.[2]

Mather's Calvinism here is thoroughly integrated with his pietism -- i.e., it is the practical expression of faith in God's soverignty and its effect upon the spiritual life in which he is mainly interested, not the theoretical formulation of the doctrine. Mather continued to be outspokenly tough-minded in his Augustinianism, and in the last year of his life he warned that the decay of morals in Britain was due to the decline of Calvinism there.

We have seen that Miller interprets Mather's activistic pietism as a movement away from Calvinism into a more anthropocentric outlook. But from the beginning of his ministry Mather laid the traditional Puritan stress on theocentric piety. One of his earlier published sermons is based on the doctrine that "*While we pray to* live, *we should account the* Praises *of God to be the Cheef End of our* Life, *in which the* Judgments *of* God *are to be sought and used as our* Help," gracefully submitting to losses and punishments, since these detach us from self-concern and lead us into a God-centered life where his will is all that matters.[1] Elsewhere he tells those under hard providences that "The Sovereignty of God, must be our *Song in the Night*";[2] and he can even encourage those fearful of reprobation to "adore the uncontroulable *Sovereignty* of God which may make you a *Vessel of Dishonor*."[3] In *A Short Life* (1714) he makes clear that the satisfaction of God Himself is the chief concern of true piety: "'Tis Enough, that be our *Time* never so *Short*, the Infinite God, has had the Pleasure of *Beholding* the Man, whereof He is the *Maker* - - - This is *End* Enough to be assign'd for the whole Creation."[4] These expressions are not simply lip-service to a doctrine; Mather falls into them with an ease which indicates that they are of the essence of his way of looking at the world. His activism is not based on some new and high value set upon mankind, but is, like Francke's social concern, merely the expression of a rigorous effort to be obedient to God, who still remains firmly at the center of his thought. In later years his own spiritual experience led him more and more into a piety of 'resignation' or yielding of self-interest in the presence of the divine sovereignty, showing some affinities for Jansenism and Quietism. This is surely the antithesis of anthropocentric humanism.[5]

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[1] C. Mather, A Seasonable Testimony to the Glorious Doctrines (Boston, 1702).

[2] C. Mather, Free-Grace (Boston, 1706), p. 2.

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[1] C. Mather, *Small Offers* (Boston, 1689), p. 107.

[2] C. Mather, *Meat Out of the Eater* (Boston, 1703), p. 119.

[3] C. Mather, *The Right Way to Shake Off a Viper* (Boston, 1720), p. 3.

[4] C. Mather, *A Short Life* (Boston, 1714), p. 13.

[5] Cf. *infra*, pp. 291 ff.

Mather has an equally firm grip on another Reformation doctrine which was meaningless to the rationalizing divines: justification by grace through faith in Christ, on the basis of the imputation of Christ's righteousness. This is particularly noteworthy since Mather's Puritan pietism, like all movements attempting to forward 'practical godliness,' risked obscuring justification by its stress on sanctification, or even absorbing the former into the latter. In his early tract, Little Flocks Guarded (1691), Mather attacks the Quakers and Rome together for doing just this, confusing justification with sanctification in holding that men are justified by infused righteousness.[1] His Everlasting Gospel, (1700), a work specifically directed to the defense of the Reformed doctrine of justification, develops its thesis, "The righteousness of God is by faith in Jesus Christ," with a clear statement that this is an imputed righteousness apprehended by faith. Mather negotiates with ease all the problems involved:

> God never gives the Righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ unto any man, without giving him Faith to Take the Gift of Righteousness . . . Faith is the proper Condition of our Justification . . . However, in the sense that it is commonly taken, Even that also is to be Asserted. But it will suffice, if we say, That Faith is the Instrument of our Justification. . . . Faith does not justify us, as it is a Work; No, Tis Instrumentally, and Relatively, and because it carries us unto the Righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ alone for our Justification.[2]

Mather is careful to preserve an indissoluble connection between justification and sanctification, as preceding orthodoxies had not always done, maintaining that "The faith which does Receive the Righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, will Purify the Heart."[3] One of his later writings, The

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[1] C. Mather, Little Flocks Guarded (Boston, 1691), p. 20.

[2] C. Mather, The Everlasting Gospel (Boston, 1700), pp. 22-3.

[3] Ibid.

Marrow of the Gospel (1727); identifies the central doctrine of Christianity as the unio Christi, since we are justified through an imputed identity with Christ in his obedience, sacrifice, and total work on earth, and sanctified through the transforming presence of his Spirit within us, uniting us to him.[1] Other treatments of this doctrine in Mather are innumerable; it is alluded to in every applicatory section which deals with regeneration, and that means virtually in every sermon Mather preached. It was the absence even of the concern for justification, or comprehension of the term, in the English rationalists, which moved Mather to be concerned over their apostasy. If there is any rationalism involved in Mather's handling of this and the other Reformation emphases mentioned above, it is orthodox rationalism rather than Enlightenment heterodoxy.

But a persuasive element in Miller's thesis is that there was enough scholastic rationalism in Mather's tradition to move him unconsciously toward the Enlightenment -- at least enough so that the soil which he cultivated became receptive to the seeds of the new emphasis on reason. We must therefore consider Mather's own positive evaluation of the place of reason in theology and in the Christian life.

Along with Reformed orthodoxy in general, Mather allowed both for a certain kind of knowledge of God obtainable by the natural man through reason, and asserted that there was a valid use of reason by the regenerate personality. The Westminster Confession had stated that there was sufficient knowledge of God available through natural revelation to leave man inexcusable in his rebellion against God;[2] and indeed this seems to have been the position of Calvin himself, following Rom. 1:18-21 and 2:14-16.[3]

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[1] C. Mather, The Marrow of the Gospel (Boston, 1727).

[2] The Westminster Confession of Faith, Ch. 1: 1.

[3] John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion I, v, 1; cf. Heinrich Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, Trans. by G. T. Thomson and Ed. by Ernst Bizer (London, 1950), pp. 1-2.

Mather is not really going beyond Reformed orthodoxy when he says, in 1709,

> There is in every Man . . . a Faculty called *Reason*. 'Tis that which is called, Prov. 20:27 . . . *the Candle of the Lord*. By the *Light* of this precious and wondrous *Candle* it is, that we discern the *Connection & Relation* of Things to one another. There are certain *Idea's* imprinted on the Spirit of Man, by God, . . . a rich cluster of *Ideas* which we are born withal, and which are only awakened, and brought into Exercise by Observation . . . *Reason* Judges of what is *Mathematically True* or *False*. But this is not all; It Judges as often, and as clearly, what is *morally Good*, or what is *Morally Evil*.[1]

In the ensuing context Mather seems to give a godlike eminence to the rational faculty, but the orthodox concept of reason securing man's inexcusable guilt in rebelling against God is still his basic point:

> We have to do with GOD, as often as we have *Right Reason* calling upon us . . . And I will now say, We never *Transgress* any *Law of Reason*, but we do at the same time, *Transgress* the *Law of GOD* . . . God sets up *Reason* in Man. If we do not keep *Reason* in the *Throne*, we go to *Dethrone* the Infinite GOD Himself. The voice of *Reason*, is the *Voice of GOD*.[2]

This is perhaps the strongest statement of apparent rationalism in Mather. But he is not speaking here of the trustworthiness of human reason as it normally operates in the unredeemed mind, but of what Tillich calls the 'depth of reason,' the kind of consciousness in which the mind, awakened by the Spirit, perceives truth and goodness theonomously, at a level beneath its rebellious rationalizations against God. For Mather is thoroughly convinced that the normal rationality of the race has been corrupted by the Fall.

> *There is hardly any one thing in the World, the Essence whereof we can perfectly comprehend*. But then to the *natural Imbecility* of

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[1] C. Mather, *A Man of Reason* (Boston, 1718), pp. 3-4. In this passage, as in several others in his work, Mather rejects not only the moral relativism of Hobbes, but also the Lockean experimental theory of the understanding. The rejection of innate ideas and the presentation of the soul as a *tabula rasa* were Socinian trademarks, and in negating these Mather is more sensitively orthodox than Edwards later was; cf. Heppe, *op. cit*., p.1.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 7; cf. C. Mather, *Diary*, II (New York, 1957), 144.

> REASON, and the *moral Depravations* of it, by our Fall from God, and the Ascendant which a corrupt and vicious *Will* has obtained over it, how much ought this Consideration to warn us against the Conduct of an *unhumbled Understanding* in things relating to the *Kingdom of God*?[1]

Besides recognizing the corruption of the mind, Mather also strongly contends, against the English rationalists, that there are many important elements of biblical revelation which are beyond the capacity even of the enlightened and corrected reason to grasp.

> There are *Mysteries* in *Religion*, which we *know not now*, but we may *know hereafter*. Those Men are strangers to *Christianity*, who are so Vain, as to write, *Christianity not Mysterious* . . . 'Tis true, there is nothing in the *Christian Religion*, that is *against Reason* . . . God, who makes *all Truths*, will make no Rules of Reason, that shall give any Contradiction to them. Nevertheless, there are *Truths* that go *beyond Reason*; Truths, that soar *above Reason*; *Truths* which the faculties of our feeble *Reason* cannot see to, especially as our Fall from God has enfeebled and impaired our faculties.[2]

This is an explicit attack on English Deism of Toland's style. Mather detects the covert linkage between enthusiasm and rationalism between Quakers and Deists, in the idolizing of the human reason:

> *Reason* is *Idolized* . . . when Men will set *Reason* above *Revelation* . . . When the *Light within*, becomes unto us, a CHRIST, and a GOD; When the *Natural Conscience* is advanced unto all the Offices of our only SAVIOUR. A *Creature*, and one too that is darkend and wounded by Sin, must not be *Deified*.[3]

A study of the total context of Mather's statements about the use of reason must lead us to the conclusion that he is not a rationalist in the eighteenth century sense. Perry Miller assumes that because Mather frequently dealt with the subject of reason after 1700, he must have wanted to jump on the Enlightenment bandwagon -- or, more exactly, to "capture the Enlightenment," to seize the reins of the wagon and steer it in a conservative direction.[1] But Mather was doing what every Christian leader of stature attempts: to relate himself to the *Zeitgeist* and witness to it in its own language, even while rejecting its basic presuppositions. This is always a delicate maneuver. When one seeks to speak the language of the cultured despisers of biblical Christianity, it is easy to loose one's footing and come over to their ground. But Mather does not accept the rationalists' presuppositions and methodology.[2] He criticizes them, instead, for being *irrational* in the deepest sense of reason:

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[1] C. Mather, *The Christian Philosopher* (London, 1721), p. 114.

[2] C. Mather, *Utilia* (Boston, 1716), pp. 260-1.

[3] C. Mather, *Iconoclastes* (Boston, 1717), p. 15.

> Many Hearers do much admire *that* which they call *Rational Preaching*; but when they have opposed it unto *Scriptural Preaching*, they have but betray'd a sufficient want of *Reason*. The most shallow *Divines*, and the most empty *Harangues*, have most unjustly been sometimes distinguish'd by the name of *Rational*. Whereas, the more of *Gospel* there is in our *Preaching*, the more of *Reason* there is in it. *Scripture* is *Reason*, in its highest Elevation.[3]

Mather has not said, *Reason is scripture*, but only the reverse, and with a qualification. And he allows that there is much in revelation that is suprarational. He only insists that the self-styled rationalists are actually talking culpable nonsense; that inwardly they are suppressing the witness of 'true reason,' and building a false theology which insults God, in a universe which, even in the imperfect natural revelation, shouts against its validity.

> The Greek word, KATEXEIN, used [in Rom. 1:18], carries an *Imprisonment*, in the Signification of it. There are men that have the *Truth*, in their *Understandings*, in their *Consciences*, in their *Memories*; but there they *Hold* it. They do, by a Violence upon it, *withold* it, and *Fetter*

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[1] Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), p. 345.

[2] T. J. Holmes concurs with this analysis: "Our Mather embraced Reason, but would have her remain orthodox;" "Talk of reason was becoming common in 1700, but Cotton Mather's conception of it clearly was not that which the deists of his day had in mind." *Vide* Holmes, *Cotton Mather: A Bibliography of His Works* (Cambridge, Mass., 1940), pp. 614, 889.

[3] C. Mather, *Reasonable Religion* (Boston, 1713), p. 36.

> it, from having that Impression, which it would Reasonably go on to hold, upon their Affections, and Conversations.[1]

It may be objected that this is orthodox rationalism of the sort that can very easily cross the bridge to the eighteenth century side. Perhaps it is, although our own location, in a century which has reacted against rationalism to an opposite extreme, makes it difficult for us to judge. It must at least be admitted that Mather does not sufficiently indicate the difference in kind between the knowledge the mind can have of God apart from personal encounter and illumination by the Holy Spirit, and the knowledge given by the convicting witness of the natural conscience and reason. He represents this difference as merely a matter of degree.

> More of the Thing that is Right is to many People declared by Revelation. Reason alone will tell us what is Right, as far as concerns meer Natural Religion, and the Peace of Humane Society. But Reason alone, without further and Special Instruction from God, will not carry us on to all the Right Things, that are to bring us unto the fruition of God; our Light within, especially since our Soul has been wounded by our Fall from God, is an Insufficient Guide unto everlasting Happiness. Wherefore, our God has helped us by Revelation.[2]

But it is possible to make a case for Mather's 'true reason' as a valid exposition of Paul's treatment of the subject under the heading of natural revelation in the early chapters of Romans (1:18 ff., 2: 14 ff.) and as 'the mind of Christ' in I Cor. 2. Mather often speaks of reason in a way which seems optimistic to us, but he is not in this magnifying the powers of the unregenerate mind, but unconsciously begging the question -- endeavoring to obtain from natural theology truths and conclusions unconsciously imported from revealed religion.

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[1] C. Mather, "Biblia Americana" (unpublished ms. in Massachusetts Historical Society, finished ca. 1713) on Rom. 1:18.

[2] C. Mather, Utilia (Boston, 1716), p. 115. This concept of the relation between natural and revealed religion is, however, typical of Reformed orthodoxy; cf. Heppe, op. cit., p. 7.

But even if we grant the fact that there is a degree of orthodox rationalism in Mather, it cannot be demonstrated that this germinal amount has gone to seed in him. On the contrary, he seems to lean over backwards in reaction to the logic-spinning of scholasticism. This accounts for his supposed double attitude toward reason, in which he seems to be both an anti-intellectual and a proponent of some of the new uses of reason. Mather has Luther's contempt for the schoolmen, for their

> . . . *Metaphysicks*; which a learned Man too justly calls, *Disciplinarum Omnium Excrementum*, tho' she would set up for the *Queen of Sciences* . . . A *Suarez*, than whom you cannot easily find a greater dealer in *Metaphysicks*, after all declared, The *Hours* which he took in Studying and Examining and Rectifying his *own Heart*, were of infinitely more Use and Worth to him.[1]

He is especially critical of Aristotle, that "Muddy-headed Pagan," "Who after the prodigious Cartloads of Stuff, that has been Written to explain him . . . he yet remains in many other Things besides his *Entelechia* sufficiently *Unintelligible*, and forever in almost all things *Unprofitable*."[2] Although his father had learned his aversion to the Philosopher from Peter Ramus, Cotton is dubious of the value of all systems of logic including the Ramaean:

> What is there usually got by the *Vulgar Logic*, but only to be furnished with a Parcel of *Terms*, which instead of leading the Mind into the *Truth*, enables one rather to carry on *Altercations*, and *Logomachies*, by which the Force of *Truth* may be at Pleasure, and by some little *Trick*, evaded. The Power and Process of *Reason* is *Natural* to the Soul of Man; And those *Masters of Reason*, who argue the most *Rationally*, and make the most *Rational Researches* into the true State of Things and . . . arrive to the most notable Discoveries, I pray, what sort of *Logicians* are they? Either they never once read a Page of any *Burgesdicius*, or else they have unlearnt and forgot all their *Vulgar Logic*. To exhibit in the pompous Form of an *Art*, what every One does by meer *Nature* and *Custom* . . . appears as impertinent, as if one should with much Formality teach the *Art* of *Eating* or *Drinking* or

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[1] C. Mather, *Manuductio ad Ministerium* (Boston, 1726), p. 37.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 49.

> Walking. And it might with equal Solemnity be shown, what Points of Regular Management are exemplified by the Boys playing at their Marbles.[1]

Much of the American future is in this statement. Mather has turned from scholasticism to equate true reason with New England common sense. He has also strongly preferred the inductive logic of the Scientific Method, which he goes on to praise unrestrainedly: "As thorough an Insight as you can get into the Principles of our Perpetual Dictator, the Incomparable Sr. Isaac Newton, is what I mightily commend unto you. Be sure, the Experimental Philosophy is that, in which alone your Mind can be at all established."[2] But if Mather sounds 'modern' in these passages, it does not follow that he is in transit theologically toward the Enlightenment. He found some kinds of 'reason' overly complex, those involved in systems of deductive logic and scholastic metaphysics, and these he sought to simplify. Other kinds he found basically irrational because of their false presuppositions, as with religious rationalism, and here he sought to uncover and refute the underlying philosophoumena. In both these reactions there is really a movement contrary to orthodox rationalism. For while this sought to extrapolate a theologia gloriae from a tenuous basis in biblical evidence, Mather strives constantly to arrive at indubitable biblical fundamentals. The anti-intellectualism which Miller finds in him is really the same Protestant biblicism exhibited by Spener and Francke, which is inimical to confessional orthodoxies.

Miller has also suggested, however, that Mather's pietism with its simplification of theology, was itself susceptible to transformations leading toward Enlightenment rationalism.[1] This argument also appears plausible, for we have grown used to thinking of pietism as a theological solvent -- an ingredient in German theology, for instance, which could lead Halle to embrace the rationalism of Thomasius and Christian Wolff by the middle of the eighteenth century, and produce the subjectivism of Schleiermacher by the beginning of the nineteenth. A number of highly respected European historians and theologians in this century have adopted this interpretation.[2] It has not, however, gone unchallenged by other scholars with a closer first-hand knowledge of the nature of Pietism. A. W. Nagler observes that early continental Pietism and the Methodism of the Awakening were both antithetical to theological rationalism and helped contain its spread, a fact which is just as clearly evident in the American Awakening. Nagler feels that the growth of rationalism simply overpowered Pietism, and eroded it into something resembling the old lifeless orthodoxy. Jaroslav Pelikan suggests that the real succession is between scholastic orthodoxy and rationalism.[3] Dale Weaver Brown points out that most generalizations about Pietism leading to rationalism are grounded on the conclusions of Ritschl, who based his own analysis mainly on the enthusiastic wing of Pietism and later aberrant forms, and who specifically excluded Spener from his judgments. Brown insists that subjectivism, the connecting link between degenerate types of Pietism and the Enlightenment, exists only in radical Pietists such as Gottfried Arnold, who were experience-centered rather than biblically oriented. Spener and Francke, on the other hand, did not make Christian experience a source of theological truth, but only an indispensable medium through which this truth must be existentially received.[1] This, of course, was precisely the stance of the central stream of English Puritanism in opposition to the left-wing enthusiasts during and subsequent to the Revolutionary period, and it is a position quite distinguishable from ordinary orthodoxy, enthusiasm, and Enlightenment rationalism, since it insists both on a strong biblical anchorage and on the leading and empowering of the Holy Spirit.[2]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 35-36.

[2] Ibid., p. 50.

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[1] Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), pp. 406-16.

[2] E. G. Erich Seeberg, who calls them "feindliche Brüder"; and Karl Barth, who refers to them as two forms of one nature, both based upon the spirit of Lebensverbesserung and thus anthropocentric in nature. Emil Brunner feels that both orthodoxy and Pietism were involved in the generation of Enlightenment rationalism. Vide Dale Weaver Brown, "The Problem of Subjectivism in Pietism" (unpublished doctoral thesis, Northwestern University, 1962), pp. 129, 156, 171.

[3] Jaroslav Peliken, From Luther to Kierkegaard (St. Louis, 1950).

Unless we start with Pietism at its worst and weakest, it is hard to draw a straight line from its teachings to those variant theologies which surrounded and occasionally supplanted it. Whatever 'rationalism' may be, its antithesis is certainly a profound dependence on objective revelation, and this is paramount in the biblicism of Spener, Francke, and Mather, although each (in order to be consistently biblical) allows for enough independent leading of the Spirit to arouse the suspicions of Orthodoxy. Wherever theological authority is anchored on something less solid than the naked data of revelation in the biblical record, made existentially real through the operation of the Spirit -- whether the alternative is the Inner Light, or a set of rational constructs supposedly rooted in revelation, or clear and evident truths of reason -- there is a bridge established which leads to those non-Christian thought-systems we call rationalist. No

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[1] Brown, op. cit., passim.

[2] Mather specifically dissociated himself from enthusiastic and subjectivistic pietism: "As there is a Fanatick, so there is an Orthodox, a Reformed, and Heavenly Pietism." Vide The Heavenly Conversation (Boston, 1710), Author's Preface.

'system' or 'strategy' adopted by a leader will prevent his followers from building illicit bridges after him, often by removing elements of his thought from their context and dismantling structures which were in tension. But it is a hard thing to bring him to account for the mutations which follow in his aftermath. We cannot hold Edwards responsible for the New England Theology; much less should we hold Mather accountable for American rationalism. He anticipated some of its better features, but he vigorously repudiated both its method and its content as he saw these beginning to operate in English and American theology.

3. The Content of Mather's Simplified Theology

Mather's theology is, then, essentially Reformed orthodoxy stripped back to biblical essentials. But there are many scholastic *vestigia* still present, and an ornamental encrustation with 'spiritually edifying' fragments broken from an amazing variety of traditions. For Mather is quite eclectic in the sources of his theology. The authorities most cited in his work are fathers of the early church: Augustine above all, and then (in descending order of frequency) Chrysostom, Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian, Jerome, Justin Martyr, Nazianzen, Clemens Alexandrinus, Basil, Ambrose, Ignatius, Irenaeus. There is little mention of Medieval authorities, only scattered references to Aquinas, Bernard, and Hugh of St. Victor. A considerable number of allusions to "the incomparable" Calvin and to Luther are present, and other Reformation figures such as Bucer, Peter Maryr, and Ursinus are occasionally cited. Among orthodox writers Voetius is mentioned fairly often and referred to as "very great," along with Wittsius, Alsted, and Cocceius, and there are fleeting references to Beza, Scaliger, Zanchy, Heidegger, Chemnitz, Alting, Keckermann, Brentius, Bartholinus and Amyraut. Puritan and Pietist authors are much more heavily cited than these.

Among the former, Baxter rivals Augustine in frequency of citation, and there is also much attention given to Watts, Owen, Goodwin, Perkins, Ames, and a host of practical divines such as Matthew Henry, Flavel, Poole, Bayly, Downame, Scudder, Sibbes, Baynes, and Caryl. Pietist authorities cited with frequency are first of all the "imcomparable" Francke, the "great" Arndt, Spener, Gerhard, and Comenius. Mather is acquainted with conforming divines attractive to Puritan taste, among them Usher, Latimer, Andrewes, and Herbert. He is impressed with the intelligence of Grotius, and is quite frequently involved either in refuting him or enlisting his aid. He has an unusual acquaintance with and respect for Counter-Reformation theology also, citing Bellarmine and De Sales on occasion. His unusually wide knowledge of rabbinical writings has already been mentioned. He shows little acquaintance with philosophy, but a good knowledge of physical scientists such as Newton and Copernicus. Among literary artists he is familiar with Euripides, Propertius, Lucretius, Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch, Salust, and Dryden, among others.

At the end of his life, in the section of his manual for ministerial students devoted to theological study, Mather recommends careful study of the Bible itself as the primary source of the minister's theology, aided by the consultation of practical commentaries like those of Poole and especially Matthew Henry, whose work has "Out-done most that we have yet had, in this Regard: The SPIRIT which dictated the Sacred Scriptures, operating on the Mind of the Commentator, in the Dispositions and Observations of Experimental Piety."[1] Mather also recommends the use of individual commentaries, rich in experiential observation by English Puritans. It is only at this point that he goes on to recommend systematic theologians: "Let the Men who *Corrupt the Earth* . . . *Sit in the Seat of the Scorner*, and *Laugh*, and *Scoff*, at all *Systematical Divines* as long as they please, there are SYSTEMS OF DIVINITY, which I most seriously advise you, to be most intimately acquainted with."[1] As Perry Miller indicates, Mather was still content to make use of the products of rational orthodoxy even though he was dubious of the intellectual processes which had aided their production.[2] He recommends Wollebius, Ames, Witsius, Marckius' *Compendium Theologiae*, Usher's *Body of Divinity*, John Edwards' *Theologia Reformata*, and a host of less familiar writers, among them Prideaux, Tuckney, Hemingius, Aretius, and Pearson. He reserves special praise for Calvin's *Institutes*, but also for the works of Alting and Mastricht because of their experiential vitality; and he notes that those who would like a small but complete theological library need only lay in the works of Johann Gerhard and Voetius. Among polemicists Mather recommends Alsted and a host of minor writers on particular controversies; and in the field of casuistical divinity, Ames, Alsted, Baxter, and Baldwin. With a demurral against the multitude of errors in the fathers, Mather nevertheless enthusiastically commends these because of their piety. He mentions the Epistles of Clemens Romanus; the Apologies of Justin Martyr and Tertullian; Origen against Celsus; Theodoret as the best biblical expositor among these; Chrysostom's homilies; and of Augustine, the *Confessions*, *Meditations*, *De Civitate Dei*, and the letters. Mather notes also a manual of abstracts from the fathers by Scultet,[3] which I am tempted to believe was the source of much of his patristic knowledge.[1]

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[1] C. Mather, Manuductio ad Ministerium (Boston, 1726), p. 83.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 84.

[2] Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), p. 418.

[3] *Medulla Theologiae Patrum*.

Despite the unusual variety of his sources, Mather's basic theology is neither extensive nor complex; as we have noted, he spent most of his life trying to boil down the Christian faith to its absolute doctrinal essentials. Miller suggests that part of the reason for this was a desire to sharpen up the tools of Puritanism by paring away scholastic excrescences, in order to penetrate the increasingly dulled religious sensibility of New Englanders.[2] But there are two other strong motives which led to his experiments in doctrinal simplification: his obvious evident pastoral desire to communicate the essence of Christian faith to children, "*Negro's*, and others like them, of the Dullest and Lowest Capacity";[3] and his later consuming interest in closing the ranks of evangelical Protestants in some forms of ecumenical union.

Mather's "Very Short Catechism" of 1708 like much of his writing in this genre, is very much oriented to experience and self-examination rather than to bare doctrinal statement. It simply asks three questions: "Who made you?", followed by a short definition of God and man's purpose as His servant; "Who saves men?", with a definition of Christ as both God and man; and "What will become of you when you die?", promising Heaven to those obedient to Christ and Hell to those persisting in wickedness.[1] This, however, is Mather speaking to the most elemental level of intelligence, to the child or the mentally or culturally retarded. His "Abridgement of the Shorter Catechism," contained in the same catechetical manual, is a fairly artful condensation of the Assembly's work, preserving both its rudimentary Calvinism and its admixture of Covenant Theology. Mather's main work here has been not to modify the structure of the Catechism, which may be identified as the basic framework for his thinking throughout his life, but simply to condense its major theses by eliminating bridge passages. There is, however, a considerable simplification of the subject of sin, in questions 14-19; Mather does not here insist on the minutiae of our federal connection with Adam's sin, and does not distinguish original and actual sin, or amplify the results and misery of sin in fallen humanity. A somewhat earlier formulary is also an abbreviation of the Shorter Catechism into thirty-three articles, but has less direct emphasis on election and Covenant Theology.[2] Le Vrai Patron des Saines Paroles (1704), on the other hand, is a fourteen-point creed contained in a tract appealing to French Catholics, and appropriately but pugnatiously stresses such Reformation distinctives as predestination and justification through the imputation of Christ's righteousness.[3] Pastoral Desires (1712) contains, along with longer summaries of doctrine, a short creed of seven points oriented to practical spiritual needs: God as infinite Creator and Governor, man's Fall, Christ as divine/human redeemer born of a virgin, justification by faith and sanctification through the Spirit, the duty of repentance, the value of the sacraments, and the final destiny of men in Heaven or Hell. But by and large Mather is happiest with the Westminster Shorter Catechism as a basic theological summary. In the Manuductio he does not propose simplifying this, but rather its amplification with a few distinctive Matherian emphases: the active obedience of Christ securing our justification, and the ministry of good angels on our behalf.[1]

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[1] C. Mather, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-89. Particular concentrations of the works of individual theologians in the Mather libraries included five titles of Ames, six of Alsted, four of Baxter, six of Owen, five of William Prynne, three of Ramus, three of Maccovius, and eight volumes of John Edwards given to Cotton Mather by the author. Pietist works included a copy of Johann Arndt's *De Vero Christianismo* (London, 1708) and J. A. Comenius' *De Bono Unitatis* (London, 1710), gifts to the author by A. W. Boehm, two other works of Comenius and a tract by Francke, and Spener's *De Natura et Gratia* (Frankfort, 1715).

[2] Miller, *op. cit.*, pp. 406-7.

[3] C. Mather, *The Man of God Furnished* (Boston, 1708), p. 32.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] "The Shortest Catechism," in Maschil; repeated in The Instructor (1726), together with "The Shortest of All Catechisms" (vide supra).

[3] C. Mather, Le Vrai Patron des Saines Paroles (Boston, 1704), pp. 1-8; cf. Une Grande Voix du Ciel (Boston, 1725), where this is repeated.

The other main motive for Mather's theological simplification, concern for ecumenical union, appeared during the last twenty years of his life, when he was especially involved in contacts with Francke and other Pietists. Mather was here engaged in much more radical condensation than he had been in his catechetical reductions. His first sketch of the "Maxims of the Everlasting Gospel," upon which all evangelical Protestants are to unite, is in fourteen points, but most of these are challenges to personal piety rather than doctrinal articles. The points are these: One God in triune form, Christ as the eternal Son of God, the Bible as the rule of faith, repentance unto life, the acknowledgment of God in all one's life, becoming a new creature, conformity to the example of Jesus, benignity to men, the observation of the Golden Rule, careful stewardship of temporal goods, care in scriptural worship of God but also charity toward differing forms, the use of public office for good, contempt for worldly glory, and longing for piety on the whole earth.[2] This odd mixture of creed and exhortation is substantially repeated in The Stone Cut Out of the Mountain (1716), but by 1717 Mather had reduced its doctrinal core to three elements: faith in God, belief in Christ, and commitment to the Golden

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[1] C. Mather, Manuductio ad Ministerium (Boston, 1726), pp. 107-8.

[2] C. Mather, Things to Be More Thought Upon (Boston, 1713), pp. 86 ff.

Rule as the guide to evangelical obedience.[1] This schema reappears as a touchstone of self-examination for regenerate piety in *The Tryed Professor* (1710),[2] and again in *India Christiana* (1721)[3] and the *Manuductio* (1726), from which I quote its full expression:

> 1. The ONE most High GOD, who is the FATHER, and the SON, and the Holy SPIRIT, must be my GOD: And I must make it the *main Intention* of my Life to *Serve* and *Please* Him, in all Holy *Obedience* and *Submission* to Him, Remembring that His Eye is always upon me; and be afraid of *every Thing*, which His *Light* in my Soul shall condemn as an *Evil Thing*.
>
> II. A Glorious CHRIST who is the Eternal SON of GOD, Incarnate and Enthroned in the Blessed JESUS, is the REDEEMER, on whose great *Sacrifice* I must Rely for my *Reconciliation* to GOD, looking to Him, at the same time, that I may live unto GOD by Him *Living in me*: And under His Conduct I am now to expect a Blessedness in a *Future State*, for my *Immortal Soul*; to which He will restore my *Body*, when He shall come to *Judge the World*.
>
> III. Out of Respect unto GOD and His CHRIST, I must heartily *Love my Neighbour*, and forever do unto *Other Men*, as I must own it Reasonable for them to do unto *myself*.

Mather goes on to add two other codicils which he represents as understood in the three principal maxims: adherence to Scripture as the rule of faith and practice, and freedom of conscience with full civil rights for all "Faithful *Subjects* and Honest *Neighbours*."[4] This simplified and 'experimentalized' creed still has compressed into its second article a rejection of Arianism, a statement of justification by grace, sanctification through the *unio Christi*, and the bodily resurrection of believers. Its third article seems anthropocentric in that it restricts the rule of obedience to the second table of the Law, but this is guarded by the opening clause, and by the emphasis on the primacy of obedience to God in the first article.

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[1] C. Mather, *Malachi* (Boston, 1717), p.

[2] *The Tryed Professor* (Boston, 1719), p. 16.

[3] *India Christiana* (Boston, 1721), p. 53.

[4] C. Mather, *Manuductio ad Ministerium* (Boston, 1726), pp. 118-19.

Even so, this is a quite radical reduction of the theological curriculum to come out of a tradition which articulated its faith in the ample dimensions of the Westminster Confession. As Miller indicates, there was precedent for this simplification among battle-weary English Puritans, who poured out proposals like Mather's long before he began to struggle to define his Maxims.[1] But within the more conservative American Congregationalism, Mather was considerably in the vanguard and fairly bold in his broadening the limits of union. In the pursuit of his minimal creed he foreshadowed two major later tendencies: he was in a sense the first 'fundamentalist,' and the first major ecumenist, in American church history.

This does not mean, however, that Mather gradually came to abandon as unimportant the theological distinctives of his tradition. When he is not speaking in the simplicity of ecumenical or catechetical discourse, or the heat of revivalist zeal, he exhibits many vestigial remnants of orthodoxy. Most of these occur in his treatment of the doctrine of God. God is defined in remarkably Aristotelian terminology: "There must be a First Cause. This First Cause must be Independent; must be Everlasting; must have the Perfections of all other Beings in Him, and be Unlimited in His Perfections . . . Tis impossible, there should be Two Infinite Beings."[2] God is "pure Act, and when we call Him so pure a Thing as a Spirit, it is too Gross a Name to be taken without a Figure."[3] Throughout his life Mather conjoined to his Christocentric piety a devotion to the Godhead thus philosophically defined, and often analyzed into His various attributes.[1] The divine sovereignty as conceived by Beza and Perkins is defended in vigorously rational arguments in early works such as *The Principle of the Protestant Religion Maintained* (1690), which chooses to attack George Keith's Quakerism by asserting double predestination,[2] and another anti-Quaker tract, *Little Flocks Guarded Against Grievous Wolves* (1691), which flaunts its logic in the faces of enthusiasts: "*There is an eternal reprobation* . . . If there were an *Eternal Election* of some, ask them whether it be not pure Nonsense to say, that some were *Chosen*, and others were not *left Unchosen*?"[3] The logical connection of election and reprobation remained axiomatic with Mather during the rest of his life.[4] But Mather nowhere enters into the subject of the order of the decrees, even in his commentary on appropriate texts in the "Biblia Americana." He does not explicitly condemn this form of theological speculation, but he quietly ignores it as if he were unconscious that such issues could be raised. And unlike Jonathan Edwards, he will not speculate about the resolution of the tension between election and free will. "Who can reconcile *Divine Prescience* with *Humane Liberty*?" he says.[5]

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[1] Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), p. 407.

[2] C. Mather, A Christian Conversing (Boston, 1709), pp. 8-9.

[3] C. Mather, The Serviceable Man (Boston, 1690), p. 10; cf. Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, trans. G. T. Thomson and ed. by Ernst Bizer (London, 1950), pp. 53,57. The definition of God as actus purissimus et simplicissimus is common in Reformed orthodoxy.

> If you ask me, *How tis done*? I am not altogether Ignorant how the Schoolmen have expressed their Thoughts on the matter: They tell us, (& very truly,) there is that *Power* & *Wisdom* in the Divine providence, that no *Liberty* of the Humane *Will* can Resist the Efficacy thereof, and yet it so Cooperates with all causes, *Ut suaviter moveat*, all is

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[1] Cf. Mather's *The Wonderful Works of God* (Boston, 1690), an early sermon which reflects his schooling in this line of thought, and its late expression in *Christian Loyalty* (Boston, 1727), where the attributes of the Godhead are applied to Christ himself.

[2] C. Mather, *The Principle of the Protestant Religion Maintained* (Boston, 1690), p. 76.

[3] C. Mather, *Little Flocks Guarded* (Boston, 1691), p. 69.

[4] Cf. *Utilia* (Boston, 1716), p. 263; and *Free-Grace* (Boston, 1706), p. 39.

[5] C. Mather, *Utilia* (Boston, 1716), p. 263.

> most *Sweetly* carried on . . . But I wave these Speculations; I have plain people to deal withal. And for them, I will make as Learned an Answer to it as any that I have met withal. My answer is, *I cannot tell*; I say, *I cannot tell*. The best flight of our *Learning*, in such a Point as this, is a Confession of our Ignorance.[1]

Here an echo of Calvin combines with a premonition of American pastoral skill in the next century, which also 'waived speculations' in order to deal with plain people.

The Covenant Theology, which provided a conceptual framework for William Perkins and almost all subsequent theologians in the Puritan line, is firmly present in all Mather's writings. It recurs so frequently because it is essential to Mather's technology of regeneration, his handling of the process of 'closing with Christ' which it was his main concern to propagate among his people. Mather is content to carry over from his tradition the drama of the intra-Trinitarian Covenant of Redemption, resting on a slender biblical basis, because it furnishes a fine counterpoint for his insistence that a covenant of response must now be made between the people and their God, for a conversion involves laying hold of a covenant.[2] God offers Himself in all His Trinitarian perfection, all His attributes, the mediator of the New Covenant, the very Kingdom of Heaven itself, but there must be reciprocation: we must subscribe to a 'Covenant of Reconciliation' with God for these benefits to be effective.[3] Mather rarely enters into detailed handling of the double covenant and its implications, but simply sticks to his appeals for a *quid-pro-quo* response to God's action in the Covenant of Grace. I have located only one reference in his published work in which he really gives a detailed handling of the Federal headship of Adam, and our implication in his sin through representative guilt and actual pollution, although this is a late reference and thoroughly orthodox.[1]

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[1] C. Mather, *A Conquest over the Grand Excuse* (Boston, 1706), pp. 13-14.

[2] C. Mather, *The Converted Sinner* (Boston, 1724), p. 27.

[3] C. Mather, *The Duty of Children* (Boston, 1703), *passim*; and also Mather's *The Converted Sinner* (Boston, 1724), pp. 27-31. Cf. Mather's treatment of the Covenant of Grace in *The Wonderful Works of God* (Boston, 1690); *Unum Necessarium* (Boston, 1693); *Free-Grace* (Boston, 1706); *The Temple Opened* (Boston, 1709); *Man Eating the Food of Angels* (Boston, 1710); *Winter Piety* (Boston, 1712); *Thoughts for the Day of Rain* (Boston, 1712); *The Tribe of Asher* (Boston, 1717); *The Quickened Soul* (Boston, 1720); *The Marrow of the Gospel* (Boston, 1727); and *Hor-Hagidgad* (Boston, 1727).

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[1] C. Mather, *Renatus* (Boston, 1725), pp. 10-11. The unpublished "Biblia Americana" alludes to federal guilt in its commentary on Rom. 5:12 ff. It has been asserted by Perry Miller and others that the Federal Theology represented a decline from the awesome theocentrism of Calvin toward a limited and more manageable deity, and hence a movement toward Arminianism and rationalism. A persuasive form of this argument is Leonard Trinterud's contention that Covenant Theology was a fusion of Calvinist piety with rationalist and legalist elements which were inherently opposed to it, so that it could nourish both Puritan pietism and a cold orthodoxy, and continually threatened to decay into the latter (L. Trinterud, *The Forming of an American Tradition* [Philadelphia, 1949],pp. 171-5, 195, 262 ff.). Miller's excessive opposition of Calvin with the Federal tradition has been effectively attacked by E. H. Emerson ("Calvin and Covenant Theology," in *Church History*, XXV (1956), 136-44), who asserts that there is no such shift as Miller predicates in the doctrine of God, and that Calvinism is basically hospitable to the Federal development, which in fact mitigated the rationalism of scholastic orthodoxy rather than heightening it. J. M. Batten observes that the ecumenist John Dury championed the Federal Theology at the Westminster Assembly because he felt it would restrain orthodox scholasticism, give a new impetus to practical theology, and hence lead to the healing of divisions induced by the proliferation of theory (J. M. Batten, John Dury, *Advocate of Christian Reunion* [Chicago, 1944], p. 109). Several recent authors have commented that there is not an antithesis between Covenant theology and Puritan piety but rather a kind of symbiosis. Jerald Brauer observes that the system was ideally calculated to preserve a balance between 'emotional' and 'rational' elements in Christian experience (J. Brauer, "The Nature of English Puritanism," *Church History*, XXIII [1954], pp. 99-108). Norman Pettit comments that the Federal Theology was not a halfway house between Calvinism and Arminianism, but a paradoxical midpoint which sought to preserve the values of both, in stressing both God's gracious sovereignty and the necessity for human response. Pettit makes the fairly obvious point against Miller that the divine covenant is not a human compact or bargain but a unilaterally imposed administration (N. Pettit, *The Heart Prepared* [New Haven, 1966], pp. 11, 39, 219). It seems evident that most Puritans and Precisionists adopted the Federal theology because it combined the Augustinian emphasis on sovereign grace with an urgent requirement of human response, and so effectively avoided the Scylla of Pelagianism and the Charybdis of 'cheap grace' -- and also, of course, because they felt there was a good deal of covenantal structure

Mather's eclectic spirituality occasionally led him to decorate his system with ornaments from outside the Reformed tradition. Most of his interest in Patristic and Medieval spirituality is centered on mystical and ascetic techniques, but he is occasionally fascinated by a theological concept also. One such recurrent idea is the Augustinian analogy of the structure of the Trinity with the activity of human thought, which is outside the mainstream of Reformed orthodoxy.[1]

> God cannot be Infinitely and Absolutely *Perfect*, without the *Perception of Himself*, and an Immense *Joy* and *Love* resulting, therefrom finding Himself, The *Allsufficient Good*; and this *Perception*, and this *Joy* and *Love*, must also be of the most *Perfect Kind* . . . far more Excellent than that which is *Modal*; such as Creatures have: whose Perceptions and Operations are with Images, which are not the Soul itself. This is the Prerogative of the *deity*; God has a *Substantial Satisfaction* thereupon. The *Father* is the *Fountain* of the Deity; The *Son* is the *Express Image* of the Father's Person; *or God Essentially* Representing God, or the Eradiation of His Glorious Riches and Fulness therefore, also from all Eternity containing in Him the *Idea* of all that was to be made in Time; The *Holy Ghost* is that wonderful *Joy* and *Love* which God has in Himself, by the Grateful *Perception* which the Father and Son eternally have of one another.[2]

Mather is impressed by the devotional power of this representation of the interior commerce of the Godhead, and recommends meditation on it to infuse God's love and joy into the believer's heart. While he repudiates Platonic mysticism, he has a sweet tooth for its products, which is

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in the Bible itself, which is hard to deny. Trinterud's generalization about the legalism of the Federal system is interesting but a little deceptive, for when the Law was taken with dead seriousness by Covenant theologians it drove them both toward a desperate reliance on grace and toward serious and vital piety. Where it was taken superficially it led to complacent deadness; but an exactly similar morphology is visible in Lutheran orthodoxy, which leads us to suspect that there is something which puts the chill of death on evangelical orthodoxies which may be independent of their content and structure, and may have something to do with the way their proponents apprehend them and act upon them.

[1] Heppe, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-8.

[2] C. Mather, *Blessed Unions* (Boston, 1692), p. 47.

frequently in evidence in all his work.

But perhaps the most important novelty which Mather fused into his orthodox theological groundwork was his eschatology. The Westminster standards, like all previous major creedal statements, had been carefully innocent of chiliasm, but there was a considerable undercurrent of chiliastic expectation in English and American Puritanism that is already apparent in the Savoy Declaration of 1658 and in the subsequent theological platforms of Cambridge and Saybrook.[1] Both Mathers shared in this millenial enthusiasm. Chiliasm is one of the most frequently recurring motifs in Cotton Mather's writing, almost a theological *idée fixe*; and as Benz has indicated, it is at the root of the revivalist and ecumenist goals he shared with German pietism.[2] In his earliest lengthy publication he speaks of himself as an eager chiliast with "impatient longings for the revolution of a golden age, wherein there shall be ... . a general peace or truce, throughout the whole world"[1] In two election sermons of 1691 he set aside the conventional Jeremiad to present a view of the "wonderful state of Peace" toward which he felt the church moving, defined as a thousand-year earthly reign of Christ after his return, with a restoration of the Davidic kingdom to the Jewish people. The destruction of the papal Antichrist must precede this, and Mather concluded from biblical data that this might occur within twenty-five years. At this point, Mather considered that the removal of the 'hindrance' mentioned in II Thess. 2:7 was the destruction of the Roman empire, leading to the rise of the Roman Antichrist, together with ten secular kingdoms, the 'deadly wound' given to the 'fourth kingdom' of Daniel having thus been healed through the reappearance of the Beast in religious guise. This Mather dated ca. A. D. 450. Adding 1260 years to this, more or less, gave a date in the second decade of the eighteenth century; and Mather felt the date might well be 1716, since he thought the parousia might occur at the end of the earth's sixth chiliad, and by his computation it was, in 1691, the year 5575 after Creation.[2] In the meantime, he was looking for the destruction of the Roman Babylon and the ending of the Turkish 'second woe,' and for the plentiful effusion of the Holy Spirit which would be necessary for the conversion of the Jews and a great ingathering of other converts.[3] He felt that this fulfilment of the prophecy of the Spirit's outpouring, in Joel 2, might well begin 'half a time' (180 years) after the 'first

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[1] C. C. Goen, "Jonathan Edwards: A New Departure in Eschatology," *Church History*, XXVIII (1959), 34. As G. F. Nuttall points out (in *Visible Saints* [Oxford, 1957], p. 157), seventeenth-century millenarianism is a subject of crucial importance in understanding the period which has so far been very imperfectly explored by scholars. While both Reformed and Lutheran orthodoxy identified chiliasm with Anabaptist heresy, the Reformers themselves had carried over from Joachim de Fiore and later spiritualists the valuable apologetic concept of the papacy as Antichrist, and this motif generated millenial speculation in the post-Reformation period in men like Comenius, Alsted, and Jurieu, according to S. J. Case (*The Millenial Hope* [Chicago, 1918], pp. 187-91). C. A. Briggs notes that while the Westminster Assembly did not go on record on this subject, a majority of the divines there were chiliasts of one sort or another ("The Origin and History of Premillenarianism," *Lutheran Quarterly*, IX [1879], 207-45). The Mathers were particularly influenced by the millenial writings of Thomas Beverley, five of whose books were in their libraries (*vide* J. H. Tuttle, "The Libraries of the Mathers," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, XX [1911], 317), and perhaps also by the pioneer ecumenist John Dury, whose chiliastic hopes for revival exactly paralleled their own (*vide* J. M. Batten, *John Dury* [Chicago, 1944], pp. 128-140). Perry Miller accuses Increase Mather of stretching the truth in his statement that most of the early New England divines were chiliasts (Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 185), but the evidence seems to confirm Mather's contention.

[2] Benz, "Pietist and Puritan Sources of Early Protestant World Mission," *Church History*, XX (1951), 51.

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[1] C. Mather, Military Duties (Boston, 1687), p. 2.

[2] C. Mather, A Midnight Cry (Boston, 1692), pp. 62-3.

[3] C. Mather, Things to Be Looked For (Boston, 1691), passim.

Reformation' in 1517, or around 1697.[1] Mather is therefore watching world events carefully for signs of the End. Some are political: the breaking of Turkish oppression, and especially the defeat of Rome -- since "*Zion's* Building and *Babylon's* Ruin, the *Lamb's* Marrying and the *Whore's* Burning, do go together. The Church *Militant* and *Malignant* are like a pair of Balances, or the Buckets of a Well; when one goes up, the other goes down."[2] But most are spiritual in nature: extraordinary conversions (especially of Jews), outpourings of the Spirit in movements of reformation and revival, and the approach of a state of peace in the world and in the church. At first glance we seem to have a paradox here: we expect revivalism to issue out of Edwards' postmillenial view (though it is more likely that the revival induced the postmillenialism!), but we are not accustomed to premillenial optimists. But the fact is that *the Mathers expected both revival and decline as the signs of the close of the age*: the wicked were to become more wicked, and the righteous more righteous.[3] And so no matter what happened in world history during his lifetime, Cotton Mather could interpret it with perfect confidence as a sign of the End.

But the course of history was especially cooperative with his interpretive scheme during the 1690's. The decline was going on apace, the dull and the wicked were increasing in apathy and iniquity. At the same time, the English were prospering against Catholic France, which Mather identified with the Tenth Kingdom; and the Turkish moon was waning in the Near East. In 1696, in the lee of the predicted *annus mirabilis*, Mather experienced an awakening consciousness of coming spiritual revolutions; and sure enough, the next year brought the shattering of a Catholic plot against King William and a decisive defeat of Turkish interests. Toward the end of the century, and even earlier in the decade, reports were circulating of miracles in Europe, and the zeal of reforming societies in England.[1] Mather detected a 'whispering among the King's servants' concerning his return.[5] Nevertheless, by 1704 Mather had begun to hedge on the exact date in his unpublished "Problema Theologicum," an essay on the premillenial Second Coming of Christ, recalculating with the help of the Samaritan Pentateuch that the date might be 1736 or even later, although doubtless within the century.[3] In *Vigilantius* (1706) Mather publicly stated that

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[1] C. Mather, *A Midnight Cry* (Boston, 1692), pp. 62-3.

[2] C. Mather, *Blessed Unions* (Boston, 1692), p. 84.

[3] Cf. Increase Mather, *The Mystery of Israel's Salvation* (London, 1669), p. 39, which contains most of the emphases which are present in Cotton Mather's early treatments of the subject. Despite his friend Baxter's opposition to Thomas Beverley's views and many of his own, Increase continued just as eager to be a hopefully as enthusiastic a chiliast as his son; *vide* his *A Dissertation Wherein the Strange Doctrine . . .* (Boston, 1708), and *A Dissertation Concerning the Future Conversion of the Jewish Nation* (Boston, 1709).

> The Time of our Lord's *Appearing in His Kingdom* is a Perfect *Secret*; an Utter *Secret*; no man alive may without Presumption go to fix the Time for it. Some *Fanatical People* have done so, and have had nothing but an *Infamous Nickname* for the Reward of their Folly . . . Perhaps the rash confidence of many Students in *Apocalyptical* matters, carrying in their *Computations* may contribute unto the scornful, and slothful *Security*, that shall then grow so Epidemical.[4]

Mather here maintains that although the 1260 years since the rise of

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[1] Cf. Mather's *The Wonderful Works of God* (Boston, 1690), "Postscript"; *Things for a Distressed People* (Boston, 1696), pp. 32-6, 77; *Eleutheria* (London, 1698), p. 109.

[2] C. Mather, *Brontologia Sacra* (London, 1695), p. 35. Increase Mather had detected the same whispering in 1669, *vide op. cit.*, p. 41

[3] C. Mather, "Problema Theologicum" (unpublished manuscript in the American Antiquarian Society, written ca. 1704), p. 87.

[4] C. Mather, *Vigilantius* (Boston, 1706, pp. 9, 12.

Antichrist may well be expired, there may well be some play in the length of time between this expiration and the parousia; and this indefiniteness as to exact date he maintained from this point onward during the rest of his life.

This does not mean, however, that he was not expressing strong premonitions of the proximity of the End throughout his career. The deepening spiritual darkness of the 1720's only reinforced this conclusion:

> We are certainly entering the Period, in which the Stone cut out of the Mountain, is to do a formidable Execution upon the Ten Kingdoms. Yea, They who discern the Signs of the Times, and more particularly observe the Epidemical Decay of PIETY all over the world, and the deep Sleep which there is upon all but apprehend a Tremendous Revolution suddenly to surprise all the Nations.[1]

The apparent intensification of the spiritual decline did modify Mather's eschatology in an important respect, however. Until his father's death he firmly concurred with him in expecting that the coming 'revolution' would involve an ingathering of the Jewish people, and consequently he was constantly alert during this time for harbingers of the conversion of Israel. He labored himself to convert Jewish individuals, relayed every transatlantic report of successful conversions, and mentioned the subject incessantly in his writings on revival and the Millenium.[2] But despite the reports of the outpouring of the Spirit in continental Pietism, there did not seem to be any evidence during this period of a mass movement of Jews turning to Christ. In "Problema Theologicum" Mather had speculated that the expected conversion might be simultaneous with Christ's return, as the tribes literally looked upon him whom they had pierced.[1] By the year of his father's death, however, Mather had come to the conclusion that a literal restoration of the Jewish nation would be an anachronism totally out of character with the development of redemption in the Scriptures, and in his unpublished Tri-Paradisus he adopts the traditional Augustinian understanding of the Old Testament prophecies of the restoration as either already fulfilled or symbolic of the Israel of God.[2] There is a hint here that Mather was considerably more interested in the Millenium, and anxious for its arrival, than he was in mere revival. He does not, however, press for an immediate parousia, allowing that this might occur as late as A. D. 2000. On the other hand, though he has readily given up on 1716 without much loss of faith or confusion, he still holds out the possibility of 1735 or 1736 as the correct date, and resolves to pray in that direction.[3] The coincidence of the Awakening in New England with this date is at least interesting.[4]

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[1] C. Mather, The Palm-Bearers (Boston, 1725), pp. 55-6.

[2] Cf. his American Tears (Boston, 1701), p. 9; Faith Encouraged (Boston, 1718), p. 13; India Christiana (Boston, 1721), p. 46; Columbanus (Boston, 1722), p. 2.

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[1] C. Mather, "Problema Theologicum" (unpublished ms. in the American Antiquarian Society, ca. 1704), pp. 32-3.

[2] C. Mather, "Tri-Paradisus" (unpublished ms. in the American Antiquarian Society, ca. 1726), Section XI.

[3] Ibid., Section XII.

[4] In the Continental Pietist stream, Johann Arndt had been a chiliast (vide F. W. Kantzenbach, Orthodoxie und Pietismus [Gütersloh, 1966], p. 69), and Spener and Francke entertained millenial hopes which were necessarily muted because of orthodox opposition, and hence somewhat difficult to discern. Dale Weaver Brown (op. cit., pp. 274-7) represents Spener as a lifelong student of chiliasm who remained agnostic on the subject but leaned against premillenialism, although he firmly expected imminent revival in the church, and was concerned for the conversion of the Jews; and Gustav Kramer held that Francke was similarly cautious (Kramer, August Hermann Francke, Ein Lebensbild [Halle, 1880], pp. 156-161). However, the views of these men as described by Stoeffler (op. cit., p. 241) and Klaus Deppermann (Der hallesche Pietismus [Gottingen, 1961], p. 39) are quite similar to those held by the Mathers. Apologists for Spener and Francke tend to defend them from the charge of chiliasm because of the implication of otherworldliness attached to this tendency by older criticism, and they

4. Theology and Piety: the Existential Analysis of Mather's Thought

Edward Farley of Pittsburgh Seminary has recently observed, in a short but suggestive book, that every theology implies corollary piety, a set of practical applications within the existential requirements of daily life.[1] It would be more accurate to say that every theology *should* have a practical expression which is consistent with its core of meaning, since men's thoughts often point in one direction and their lives in another. It is even possible to maintain with a good conscience a *praxis pietatis* which is essentially unconnected with one's theology, and perhaps contradicts it. And there are, of course, systems so abstract that they have little possible connection with daily existence, such as the philosophy of Hegel, if we accept Kierkegaard's estimate. In such cases the theologian perhaps 'borrows' his piety from another source, and we are presented with a problem in analyzing which source is his 'real' ideology.

At any rate, the study of the interrelationship between theology and piety in a man or a movement is a neglected area in scientific historical scholarship. We have plenty of older works which practice institutional analysis, and many more recent ones engaging in intellectual, sociological, and even psychological analysis. But very few historical works attempt to relate concrete Christian experience to its source (or, on occasion, its result) in theology. The history of Christian experience is a *genre* which at this writing contains very few examples of scholarly theological exposition. The few works extant in this field specialize in one or another of

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were cautious enough in public statements to give some documentary support to this approach. But it is now clear that even premillenial chiliasm can energize a world-transforming activism, so that our later American experience is not entirely typical.

[1] Edward Farley, *Requiem for a Lost Piety* (Philadelphia, 1966).

the three great experiential strands within Christendom: the Roman Catholic, the Quaker, and the Puritan/Pietist traditions. There is at present no work which gives an overview of the history of Christian experience, operating within a framework of acquaintance with all three of the main traditions, let alone some of the more recent pieties which Farley examines.

This thesis is an effort at the analysis of Puritan theology as exemplified in Cotton Mather's thought and experience, with a necessarily modest attempt to relate Mather's experiential adaptation of Reformed orthodoxy to similar morphologies in Patristic, Medieval, and Counter-Reformation Catholicism, and in Continental Pietism. Since Puritanism has both a creative theological clarity and a profound existential concern, and also a logical drive to keep these two poles related, it is an ideal subject for such analysis. And despite his apparent idiosyncrasies, Mather himself is an almost perfect exemplar in which to study the practical outworkings of Puritanism, since he is undoubtedly the most thoroughly documented case study we have to show what Puritan theology does to a man's daily existence. He sought to construct an apotheosis of Puritan practical theology, and he revealed with relentless clarity of detail its effect on his own life.

The ensuing study will attempt to explore in its course the following questions concerning Mather's theology of Christian experience:

1. To what degree is Mather's 'abnormality,' in the eyes of many secular analysts, due to the fact that he accurately exemplifies Puritan spiritual life? Has he acquired a reputation for eccentricity simply because he has shown us more of normal Puritan experience than other men of his period and persuasion?

2. On the other hand, are the stresses and psychological imbalances which men have seen in Mather the real and inevitable expression of

pathological forces built into the Puritan theory of the spiritual life?

3. To what extent is Mather's Puritanism an accurate existential expression of Reformation theology? Puritanism sought to adapt Patristic and Medieval patterns of piety and to attach these to a Reformed theological foundation, but can we see in Mather areas where the old fabric imperfectly matched the new intellectual basis?

4. To what extent is there a shift in Mather's thought and experience from the old theocratic mood toward a renovated Puritan piety which prefigures later forms of revivalism?

5. Is it true, as Farley suggests, that a piety such as Mather's is in every respect, today, a dead option for Christians?[1] Or is there a salvageable core of genuinely biblical piety in Puritanism which can be freed from defects and accretions, and put into practice today?

The exposition which follows develops Mather's theology of Christian experience according to the Puritan conceptualization of 'the rise and progress of religion in the soul,' beginning with the rebirth of the Christian in conversion, and progressing through his nurture by the means of grace, his growth in sanctification, and his expression of renewed life in the activity of mission. Most of the inconsistencies other students have found in Mather's thinking can be resolved, or at least more fully comprehended, from this perspective. It is, after all, the stance from which Mather himself viewed his efforts as a proponent of the 'true American pietism.'

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[1] Ibid., pp. 29-56. Farley is at least consistently pessimistic, since he rejects all other options including the pieties of Neo-orthodoxy and Protestant social activism, and offers no substitutes.

PART II: THE CONTENT OF MATHER'S EXPERIENTIAL SYNTHESIS

It is a fatal mistake to think of holiness as a possession which we have distinct from our faith . . . That is a Catholic idea still saturating Protestant pietism . . . Faith is the very highest form of our dependence on God. We never outgrow it . . . Whatever other fruits of the Spirit we show, they grow upon faith, and faith which is in its nature repentance . . . Every Christian experience is an experience of faith; that is, it is an experience of what we have not.

Faith is always in opposition to seeing, possessing, experiencing. A faith wholly experimental has its perils. It varies too much with our subjectivity. It is not our experience of holiness that makes us believe in the Holy Ghost. It is a matter of faith that we are God's children; there is plenty of experience in us against it.

A man may put away many sins, and cultivate no small devotion, and yet be a loveless self-seeker and a spiritual aiguille. There are certain forms of self-edification which run out into self-absorbtion, and leave men, and especially women, working at goodness rather than at duty.

A Church of sanctified egoisms would be no Church. Its essence would not be faith but moral or spiritual achievement.

The Pietist idea pursues perfection as mere quietist sinlessness with a tendency to ecstasy. Its advocates are people sometimes of great grace and beauty; but it represents a one-sided, narrow, and negative spirituality. Its religion is largely emotional, mystical, and introspective. Its adherents are apt to be the victims of visions and moods. They seek perfection in a state of sinlessness. It is a condition largely subjective, ascetic, anaemic, feminine . . . There is an absence of true humility. In its stead there may be either a laboured counterfeit, as painfully sincere as it is unsimple; or there is a precise self-righteousness which cannot veil a quiet air of superiority . . . In its choicer forms this pietism is devoted to love and prayer; but it seldom escapes the tinge of self-consciousness in their culture.

We are not saved by the love we exercize, but by the Love we trust.

The saints, in the New Testament, are not the saintly but the believing . . . That is to say, perfection is not sanctity but faith."

-- P. T. Forsyth, Christian Perfection, pp. 7, 9, 16, 54, 71, 81.

CHAPTER III

REGENERATION: THE INCEPTION OF PIETY

1. The 'Loading' of the Conversion Experience in Puritanism

In any treatment of Puritan piety the subject of conversion should be handled first, not simply because this experience ~~is~~ for Puritans the inception of piety, but also because in their tradition this first awakening to God receives a distinctive and exaggerated stress, enlarging it to the point of hypertrophy. Conversion, for Puritans, is not a prologue to the Christian life; it is more often a climactic drama to which the rest of spiritual development is only a long quiet epilogue. The resulting imbalance is what we might call a 'loading' of the conversion experience, which forces it to bear an impossibly heavy freight: for all the developed content of the most refined and matured Christian sensibility, the fruit of years of growth as defined in other experiential systems, is here poured into the mold of the soul's first dealings with God.

A number of recent writers who have grasped the importance of spiritual experience in the Puritan mentality have accurately seized on the issue of conversion as the crucial one in every main theological system in the movement. Alan Simpson defines the essence of the Puritan thrust simply as a doctrine of conversion, Cromwell's "heart of the matter."[1] H. C. Porter notes that the whole work of Perkins, the foundational Puritan theologian, was designed to solve the problem of assurance of regeneration, the "Case of Conscience, the Greatest There is."[2] Cotton Mather, standing at the end of the Puritan movement in its theocratic phase, returns to the theme of conversion with hypnotic regularity, making it the first and principal application of nearly all his sermons. For Mather, the "one thing needful" of his early treatise, Unum Necessarium, is predictably not the listening nurture of the reborn disciple mentioned in the biblical text, but the experience of saving grace through the conversion process.[1]

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[1] Alan Simpson, Puritanism in Old and New England (Chicago, 1955), p. 2.

[2] H. C. Porter, Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge (Cambridge, England, 1958), p. 289.

We might assume that this peculiar emphasis on the inception of the spiritual life is a correlate of the Puritan ecclesiology, which strives toward a pure church of regenerate members. It is true that there is a supportive interaction between the theory of church membership and the theory of conversion. Nevertheless, as E. S. Morgan has pointed out, the ecclesiological motive was secondary. The main energy behind the Puritan preoccupation with the morphology of conversion was the same one that drove Luther in his definition of justification sola fide: a passionate desire for assurance of salvation.[2] But why were the Puritans dissatisfied with Luther's answer, and why did they persist in probing the nature of initial saving faith?

It was undoubtedly because they sensed a certain weakness and one-sidedness in Luther's approach as developed by his successors, as did the Pietists and such later critics as Kierkegaard and Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer has unforgettably characterized this weakness as the offer of "cheap grace," justification through the imputation of the 'wholly alien righteousness' of Christ, held in an artificial separation from sanctification, so that it can rest on the believer like a clean garment covering a basically uncleansed life.[1] Almost any system of experiential Christianity is involved in the attempt to build into itself safeguards against cheap grace. In medieval Catholicism the safeguards were a semi-Pelagian theology combined with the institution of the confessional.[2] The experiential balance between presumption and despair was here achieved, of course, at the cost of an injection of legalism; and the Reformation reaction against this lapsed over into a practicing antinomianism in the period of scholastic orthodoxy. In counter-reaction to the scholastic imbalance, the Continental pre-Pietists and the English Puritans turned from the Medieval solution to the motif of rebirth, drawn from pre-Reformation mystics such as Tauler, from New Testament sources.[3]

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[1] C. Mather, Unum Necessarium (Boston, 1693); cf. Luke 10:42.

[2] E. S. Morgan, Visible Saints (New York, 1963), p. 66.

It may be, however, that the tradition of Continental Pietism avoided loading the experience of conversion in quite the same way as did Puritanism, because of its greater dependence on Catholic mysticism with its stress on the development of a Christian life begun in baptism its own doctrine of baptismal regeneration, and its minimizing of the problem of election, which tormented the Puritan with the necessity of being assured at the outset.

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[1] The revival of Luther scholarship in this century has largely cleared Luther himself of this orthodox perversion of his thought (cf. E. Gordon Rupp, The Righteousness of God (London, 1953)), although some otherwise able scholars still insist on reading the scholastic doctrine into Luther: cf. Regin Prenter's Spiritus Creator, tr. by J. M. Jensen (Philadelphia, 1953).

[2] Cf. G. G. Coulton, "The High Ancestry of Puritanism," in Ten Medieval Studies (Boston, 1906), pp. 59-60. Coulton points out that the Medieval faith shares the preoccupation with conversion and a viable assurance of salvation that Cardinal Newman later attributed to Puritanism. We might add that Catholic missioners today exhort believers to avoid dying in a condition of mortal sin, with the same persistence, frequency, and urgency that Puritans and revivalists gave to their treatment of initial conversion.

[3] The same motif, again springing mainly from mystical sources, is employed for similar purposes by the Continental Anabaptists, but with markedly inferior theological skill.

In Arndt, and the subsequent Continental tradition through Spener and Francke, there is a balancing stress on the continuous process of sanctification which follows regeneration. Arndt was concerned to emphasize repentance as well as the creedal faith of the orthodox, but he remembered well the first of Luther's theses, that evangelical repentance is not a single act but a lifelong attitude.[1] Even Francke, with his Puritan-influenced stress on the definite conversion experience, has a full treatment of Christian growth as a continuing process.[2]

In the Puritan tradition, however, a heavily predestinarian theology thrust upon the conversion event a much heavier content of spiritual experience, required to ease the crisis of assurance in the believer's mind. Hence the loading of this experience is distinctively a Puritan phenomenon, and is the trademark of this tradition in all its subsequent historical incarnations. We cannot say, of course, that a movement which produced men like Sibbes, and works like Owen's treatises on indwelling sin, entirely ignored sanctification in its preoccupation with initial regeneration. But by Mather's time, pastoral concern had narrowed into a mechanical effort to get the membership of the community, and in fact most of the congregation, to go through a "process of repentance." It remained only for future revivalists to keep the stress on conversion, but (quite properly) to eviscerate it of its inappropriately complex loading of advanced Christian experience, and then to neglect the reinsertion of this content in the development of the Christian life through sanctification. The result was the spiritual bankruptcy of most later revivalism, with its shallow view of the Christian life embracing a momentary conversion at the outset, followed by a life of interior emotionalism and exterior verbal 'witnessing.' Mather is a connective link in this development, for in him we find the continued reliance on conversion as the main tool in pastoral care and spiritual awakening. The appeal to "go through the process" is the central point of application in almost every Mather sermon.

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[1] Johann Arndt, Of True Christianity, tr. by A. W. Boehm, I (2nd Eng. ed., London, 1720), xlvi.

[2] E. Peschke, Studien zur Theologie August Hermann Franckes, I (Berlin, 1964), passim.

2. The Process of Conversion According to Mather

Another distinctive feature in the Puritan heritage was the analysis of the conversion event into a series of preparatory stages followed by an ultimate closing with Christ, the so called Busskampf. The early Puritan pastors liked to engage in the same kind of speculation beyond the biblical evidence familiar in the system-building of scholastic orthodoxy, but their interest was in Christian experience instead of abstract theology, so that they elaborated the stages of conversion rather than the order of the decrees. The subsequent revivalist tradition, while it kept the Puritan loading of conversion, abandoned the typology of the Busskampf as therapeutically dangerous; and Mather shows some signs of movement in this direction. But before examining Mather's modification of the tradition, we shall review briefly the development of the process of conversion in English and American Puritanism.

The founders of the Reformed theological tradition gave little attention to the psychological analysis of conversion. Evidently they considered the heart as being taken by storm in regeneration, with the divine sovereignty enlightening the mind and rectifying the will without much conscious seeking or cooperation on the human side. The early Swiss reformers did not attempt to separate the experiences of repentance and faith and sort out the stages of these in any order. Calvin, however, seems to have allowed for a certain gradualness in God's invasion of the heart, although he holds that any turning to God is an effect of regeneration rather than a preparation for it. But he does feel that God can in some sense prepare the heart of the unregenerate for conversion through legal constraint, which is a real movement toward the later Puritan theories of preparation. Bullinger went beyond Calvin in this direction, separating repentance and faith and asserting the temporal priority of the former, as a diagnosis leading to the cure of saving faith, and apparently allowing a certain meritorious quality to unregenerate preparatory strivings.[1]

The English Puritans moved from these embryonic hints considerably further into a developed psychology of conversion. Among the early Puritan pastors, Richard Greenham avoided any kind of a breakdown of stages of conversion, and did not seek to harmonize the paradox of divine will and human responsibility, simply urging the convert to prepare his heart and not to despair of God's mercy; but he did remind him that he was unable to repent in his own strength, and urged him to confess this to God as part of his preparation. His colleague Richard Rogers ignored the question of inability but was quite concerned with a typology of the stages of conversion in order to lead the convert to a valid assurance of salvation, and defined four stages of progress toward conversion: sharp initial conviction, prolonged consideration of the state of the soul, self-humiliation, and desire for mercy kindled by the Spirit. Here for the first time we have a developed and stereotyped *Busskampf*. Another pastor, Arthur Hildersam introduced an emphasis on legal terrors issuing in mourning for sin, and defined three stages of progress in repentance: selfish fear of God (attrition), sorrow for ourselves, and sorrow toward God. Neither Rogers nor Hildersam considered the question of where to draw the line between regeneracy and unregeneracy in all of this ploughing of the soul, a fact which certainly had an unsettling effect on the urgent seeker of salvation.[1]

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[1] Norman Pettit, *The Heart Prepared* (New Haven, 1966), pp. 1-50 *passim*.

There is a fascinating variety in the treatment of the Busskampf by the great Puritan theologians of the early seventeenth century. William Perkins, raising the question of the soul's condition during preparation, reacted strongly against any Pelagian transition from unregenerate striving to regeneracy through congruent grace, insisting that we can do nothing but sin before regeneration, and that the will to conversion is already a sign of regeneration. He did, however, allow for a 'beginning' process of preparation in the unregenerate, including the use of the Law to produce legal terrors in the conscience while the heart was still basically unchanged. There are obviously paradoxes and tensions built into this approach, and some sharp edges which might wound the inquiring soul. These are mitigated somewhat by Perkins' admission that a weak faith can still be genuinely regenerate, which is an advance beyond the psychology of his pastoral predecessors. Perkins' analysis of the process of conversion included four preparatory stages through which an unregenerate soul might progress -- attendance on the ministry of the Word, knowledge of the Law, knowledge of our own peculiar sins, legal terrors (including 'conviction of sin' and 'humiliation') -- followed by four final stages which could only take place in the regenerate: serious consideration of the promises of salvation, faith, evangelical sorrow for sin, and new obedience.[2] Perkins' great pupil, William Ames, specified a simplified Busskampf of four stages: comparison of the Law and one's life, conviction of conscience, despair of salvation, and true humiliation of heart. On the other hand, the great pastor and eloquent preacher of God's grace and the Spirit's working, Richard Sibbes, reacted firmly against the spelling out of the stages of conversion and the introspective searching of the heart for assurance, though he did believe that the soul must prepare itself toward regeneration. He felt that the special operations of the Spirit were too subtle to be accurately discerned by human subjectivity, and argued that common-grace workings in the unregenerate could often seem deeper and more spectacular than the quiet work of the Spirit in the converted. Disdaining "law-work" and legal terrors as inferior and unworthy of the gospel dispensation, he simply urged an earnest striving toward repentance, and believing dependence on God's grace, until assurance was reached, leaving the exact point of regeneration uncertain. The equally influential John Preston followed along similar lines, except that he felt that effective preparation could only take place in those already regenerate, so that preparation for grace was paradoxically already a sign of its presence.[1]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 51-61.

[2] E. S. Morgan, op. cit., p. 68.

Among the New England Puritans, there was a continuing dichotomy between the strict preparationists and those who were made uneasy by this kind of close analysis and preferred to concentrate more simply on repentance and dependence on divine grace for salvation. Among the former were Thomas Hooker and, most influentially, Thomas Shepard, who reemphasized the importance of legal terrors. On the other side, Peter Bulkely agreed with Preston that preparation is already a sign of conversion; and John Cotton, consciously striving to revert to a position closer to that of Calvin, reverted to the image of the heart taken by storm and rejected any idea of conversion through preparatory stages. Unlike Calvin, however, he went so far as to deny any kind of common grace preparatory work in the soul prior to conversion.[1] In the outcome of the Hutchinson trial in the 1630's, however, the concept of conscious striving in the preparation of the heart won the day over Cotton's more Calvinistic approach, and preparationism was established as the reigning orthodoxy in New England experientialism.[2]

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[1] Pettit, op. cit., pp. 62-78.

Thus, while the Puritan tradition was generally united in the loading of the conversion experience, it was diverse in its treatment of the exact details of conversion. The diversity was not principally due to various readings of the biblical data, the usual cause of doctrinal variety among Puritans. It was rather the result of the earnest efforts of the pastor-theologians in the movement to apply the paradoxical, tension-filled portrayal of conversion in the New Testament to the diversity of spiritual conditions in the local congregation. Puritan pastors had to keep an uneasy balance between comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable;

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[1] Emery Battis, _Saints and Sectaries_ (Williamsburg, Va., 1962), p. 163.

[2] John Norton's _The Orthodox Evangelist_ (London, 1657) further refined the _Busskampf_ into six stages of preparatory conviction of sin, and six more stages of preparatory repentance, allowing the possibility that all of these might be common grace workings, and thus winning a partial approval from Cotton. According to Norman Pettit, (_op. cit._, p. 189), one line of New England ministers followed Norton, including the Mathers, Stoddard, Edwards, and the evangelists of the nineteenth century; while another 'liberal' line descended from Giles Firmin, who in _The Real Christian_ (London, 1670) criticized the preparationists for making the barriers to grace and church membership too high, inducing despair and melancholy, and ignoring the possibility of infant regeneration, which demolished the whole premise of preparationism. Firmin wanted to keep the practice of preparation, however, but to mitigate the anxiety involved in its use. Pettit's analysis is considerably oversimplified: the nineteenth century revivalists echoed Firmin's critique of preparationism and were much closer to him than to Norton, and the Mathers represent a mediating approach which sought to retain a degree of preparation but to modify it to avoid the rigors criticized by Firmin and the theological inadequacies indicated by John Cotton.

they had to make their sermons sharp enough to convict those who were complacently resting in a common-grace self-righteousness, and yet they had to have a supply of balm to apply to those wounded by the mishandling of their instruments of conviction. As a result, they not only contradicted one another in their schemas of conversion; they often contradicted themselves. We cannot read and understand any of their statements on conversion without envisaging the target at which it was aimed, the spiritual condition in a part of the congregation which they were seeking to move and change; and only thus can we comprehend how sections even within a single sermon can run counter to one another.

It is therefore not surprising that Cotton Mather, standing at the end of a heterogeneous development of conversion theory in the seventeenth century, is remarkably equivocal in his own treatment of regeneration. He stands above all the figures in the previous century, allowing some value to each peculiar emphasis, and choosing among these according to the immediate needs of his audience. Like his hero Baxter, he is much inclined to suspect that all sides of the question have something of value to offer, and that many divergences spring from semantic problems.[1] He is not concerned to set forth a consistent system of teaching on conversion, but aims simply to convert his audience using whatever stress is necessary.

In several statements throughout his career, Mather anticipates the reaction of later revivalists against complex schemes of preparation. He feels that it is dangerous to doubt our conversion because we have not consciously touched all the bases of the standard conversion schemes.

> Many of the Elect undergo fearful Troubles, hideous Terrors, in their conversion to God and Piety. But some that have had a Religious

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[1] Cf. G. F. Nuttall, Visible Saints (Oxford, 1957), pp. 158-9, on Baxter's disgust with the English Antinomian controversy.

> *Education*, and been Restrained all their Days from the more Scandalous Abominations; These are Converted unto God, after a more *Insensible manner* . . . They know not *Where* it was, nor *How* it was, that they were first brought into an *Union* with their Saviour . . . The *Preparatory Contritions*, & *Consternations*, are not alike in all that come with *Labouring* and *Heavy-laden* Souls unto our Saviour. Is the *End of all Preparations* attain'd upon you; and a CHRIST so Endear'd unto you, that you cannot bear or dare to *neglect His Great Salvation*? Then, Don't make *Ill Signs of those* that are none. Don't make a CHRIST of the Things, whereof all the *End* and *Use* is to Prepare you for Him.[1]

Mather himself was one of those who was converted "insensibly" in his religious upbringing, and so it is not surprising to find him here foreshadowing Bushnell. In another place he says of the insistence on a standardized *Busskampf*, "This is to bring the Covenant of Works into the Covenant of Grace,"[2] which was his grandfather Cotton's objection to preparationism. But he hesitates to abandon the *Busskampf* entirely:

> It is not to be supposed, that we may not lay hold on Christ by Faith, till we find such and such remarkable *degrees* of *Humiliation* in us. To Those Books which tell us we *presume* if we *believe*, before we have arrived unto certain *high strains* of Contrition in us, will not bring us to *sincere Conversion*, but *sorrowful Desperation*.
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> . . . .
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> But let no Pillows be thereby sown under the Arms of the *whom the Lord says, there is no peace unto*. Let every Man *despair* of ever *seeing the Kingdom of God*, unless he be *born again*.[3]

While administering balm to the wounded, Mather here gives a quick glance at the large mass in his audience who are resting in stolid complacency, and plants a goad in them. He does not really reject preparationism, but merely seeks to confine it within safe and healthy practical limits.

> There is a Variety in that Preparatory work, . . . [and] converts do sometimes needlessly Distress themselves, and Even deceive themselves, by insisting so much on the Measure of this Preparation. But so much

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[1] C. Mather, *Menachem* (Boston, 1716), p. 14.

[2] C. Mather, *The Christian Cynick* (Boston, 1716), p. 33.

[3] C. Mather, *Batteries upon the Kingdom of the Devil* (London, 1695), pp. 112, 114.

> of this Work, as will render us restless without a Christ; so much of this Work as will render a whole Christ precious to us be sure there must be so much in our Experience, if we would be saved.[1]

This is a pragmatic evangelical criterion which would not have sounded ungrateful to the Reformers. In these statements we can overhear certain tones which are not entirely friendly to the Hooker-Shepard tradition in New England, and which do not even blend harmoniously with John Norton.

But Mather does insist throughout his life that ordinarily repentance is a *process*, a preparatory work over an extended period of time, though he differs from other preparationists in not precisely defining the stages of that process. Motivated by the fear that some member of the congregation will slip off the hook, using the rationale of the deathbed repentance, Mather even goes to the length of insisting that the thief on the cross had been preparing his heart before his interview with Christ:

> Everything looks as if he came thither *prepared* . . . We have not the least Intimation, of any *pains* taken there to *enlighten* him, and *admonish* him . . . And yet the *Grace* Exercised by this penitent, was of so Various and Marvellous an Application that one may say, he does in a *few hours* the work of *some years*.
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> . . . .
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> It looks as if he *came thither armed* with a Zealous and intense Desire to Propagate a Sense of God in the Hearts of others . . . One does not *Per Saltum* come to this *Degree*.
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> . . . .
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> One utters his Mind after this awful manner, on this occasion; *You may as well Expect a Christ to be Crucified again, as expect such another instance of such unusual mercy*. I would not say, *quite so*.[2]

The significant item here is the denial of conversion *per saltum*. However insensibly it might come, conversion, for Mather, took time -- often, a long time. He notes approvingly that his cousin Thomas Walter, who had preached the gospel for years and yet died in despair, spent months at the end of his life going over and over the 'process of repentance.'[1] He advises his unregenerate hearers to set aside a half-hour each day to go through the process.[2] He even tells of a group of condemned pirates who broke prison in order to gain sufficient time to go through the process before their execution.[3] But even more significantly, he regards the process of repentance as *work* of the most strenuous and exacting sort: "An *Old Nature*, is like an *Old Devil*; it goes not out, without much *Prayer* to God."[4] Those who wish to be justified by faith in Christ "will have to *Wrestle* for it, with Importunate Supplications, With Agonies of Importunity."[5] So arduous is this work that it cannot be delayed until the brink of death:

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[1] C. Mather, *The Greatest Concern in the World* (Boston, 1765 [1707]), p. 13.

[2] C. Mather, *Grace Defended* (Boston, 1712), pp. 30-33.

> Have you never heard a *Sick Person* among them that have been *wise unto Salvation*, declare; *Oh! if my Grand Work were now to do*, I were beyond all *Imagination Miserable!* . . . When you have your *Head Sick*, and your *heart faint*, and all the *Powers* of soul and body *shaking*, is it now a Time to do a *Work*, that calls for the uttermost of all your *Powers*? The *Work of Repentance* will do so.[6]

Repentance is represented as an arduous ploughing of the soul with continuous repetitions of the process of repentance, for "The *Fallow Ground* will not be thoroughly *broke up*, . . . except the *Plow* do over and over again go over it."[7] This process in repentance is to be as detailed and as rigorous as a whole life's confession of a new Catholic penitant. But when "It is not enough, to *come* unto the Lord JESUS CHRIST, only that we may be brought into his Righteousness," Mather says; "We must also Ponder on all the *Maladies* of our Souls, and specify them *All*, and Mention them *All*, and Long for the Relief of them *All*."[1] But when the Puritan has finished the process he does not receive an objective and authoritative human declaration of absolution, but only a "perhaps"; and Mather takes it for granted that once through the process may not be enough to achieve a sense of pardon. On the other hand, with his eye on the real converts in his congregation who were obsessed by scruples and doubts, Mather many times throughout his career assured his people that the smallest mustard-seed of real faith and repentance was enough for salvation, and that the desire to be regenerate was already evidence of regeneration.

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[1] C. Mather, *Christodulus* (Boston, 1725), p. 27.

[2] C. Mather, *Vita Brevis* (Boston, 1714), p. 28.

[3] C. Mather, *Speedy Repentance Urged* (Boston, 1690), p. 62.

[4] C. Mather, *Unum Necessarium* (Boston, 1693), p. 45.

[5] C. Mather, *The Everlasting Gospel* (Boston, 1700), p. 52.

[6] C. Mather, *Restitutus* (Boston, 1727), p. 35.

[7] C. Mather, *Agricola* (Boston, 1727), p. 13.

In a very late work Mather summarizes his redaction of the preparatory process:

> Retire; and own your selves *Unable* to Return unto God, and *Unworthy* that He should Enable you; but implore the Help of *Sovereign Grace* on this Grand Occasion. Then, call over, Confess, Bewail, your *Transgressions* on what is *Forbidden* and what is *Required* in the *Commandments* which you have in the *Catechism* for this purpose: But above all, mourn over that *Original Sin*, which is the *Fountain* of all your *Transgressions*; and an *Heart* that is the *Mother of Abominations*. Hereupon shew and Plead the *Blood* of your SAVIOUR, that you may be *cleansed from all sin*; Pray, Beg, Weep, for the *Pardon* of all your sin: Do this, till you have a comfortable Perswasion from Above, raised in you, *That you are pardoned*. Now, Give up your selves to GOD, with hearty Desires, that having done with *Iniquity*, you may *not offend any more*; and hearty Resolves, that in the *Strength* of CHRIST *living in you*, you will *walk in holiness and righteousness before Him*, all the remaining time of your *Pilgrimage*. But let it always be remembered, A *Repentance* without a CHRIST, is but a *Repentance* for a *Devil*, rather than a *Christian*, there is nothing to be got by it. In the whole *Process of Repentance*, you must keep up an Encouraging Hope of Mercy, thro' a CHRIST appearing for you . . . You must behold a CHRIST as ready to Assist you in *cleansing your selves from all Filthiness of the Flesh and of the Spirit*, and carrying on *Holiness to Perfection* in the *Fear of GOD*. This plain *Process of Repentance*, tis what your *Salvation from evil which persueth* Sinners depends upon.[2]

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[1] C. Mather, *Free-Grace* (Boston, 1706), p. 51.

[2] C. Mather, *Agricola* (Boston, 1727), p. 11.

The process here can be analyzed into four steps: (1) Admission of inability to repent and unworthiness of redemption, and confession of dependence on divine grace; (2) Specific confession of areas of sin in the life, according to the decalogue, and of original sin; (3) Pleading the blood of Christ for cleansing of these, until assured of pardon; (4) Consecration of the life to a walk of holiness. But this simplified Busskampf is not often explicitly spelled out in Mather's work; he simply refers continually to the 'process of repentance,' taking for granted that his audience is acquainted with the details of this, as well they might be. While he relies on this formula in his pastoral work, even leading condemned prisoners through a routine of prayer based on it,[1] he does not seem to feel that it is an archetypal pattern to be followed in every case, except that it is a convenient expansion of the two elements acknowledged by the Reformation to be basic to salvation, repentance and evangelical faith. In his later ecumenical writings Mather never refers to this pattern as important for safeguarding the regenerate membership of the church, but simply focusses on the necessity of repentant faith. It seems fair to say, then, that his simplified Busskampf was a piece of methodology which he used in his own pastoral work, a convenient structure through which to process the work of evangelism, but without deep theoretical roots in his theology. It is above all a process of repentance, an attempt to secure that initial commitment to the Christian life would involve more than the shallow emotional or volitional 'going through the motions' that later revivalist 'easy-believism' would introduce, so that there would be a real transformation in the convert's life, a searching out of the contours of rebellion expressed in his particular character, and a conquest of these provinces under the government of Christ.

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[1] C. Mather, Tremenda (Boston, 1721), pp. 37, 39.

Every system of Christian piety agrees that metanoia, transformation of the heart toward the attainment of a 'new mind,' is a foundational Christian grace. Most would differ in not placing such strong emphasis on thorough and repetitive self-analysis at the beginning of the Christian life. But Mather sought to drive a deep spiritual anchor into the souls of his converts at the outset. He insisted that there be an expenditure of time involved in coming under discipleship, as Christ intimated in the parable of the tower-builder.[1] Like the Ignatian spirituality of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, he insisted on the value of lengthy meditation, consideration of the spiritual facts of the soul's situation, to motivate a deep and lasting redirection of the life's energies in the service of God.

3. Mather's Handling of the Doctrine of Inability

Mather retained in his process of repentance one of the oldest components of the Puritan Busskampf, tracing back to Richard Greenham: confession of inability to repent. This humbling admission of the sovereignty of God, usually followed by a trembling period of waiting in which the prospective convert wondered whether or not God was going to grant the needed ability to turn, was in part the cause of the length of the conversion process as Mather conceived it. According to F. H. Foster, it was also the source of a paralyzing blight of passivity which was one of the root causes of New England's spiritual decline.[2]

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[1] Luke 14:28.

[2] F. H. Foster, A Genetic History of the New England Theology (New York, 1963 [1907]), pp. 29, 43.

Whether or not this was the case, it is certain that the insistence of most Puritans on thrusting the Reformed doctrine of the bondage of the will into the foreground of the conversion experience was consistent neither with Calvin nor the New Testament. It produced a paralyzing involution of sensibility in many 'seekers after conversion' who were by our standards (and even by those of some Puritans) already genuine believers. It is remarkable that men of such pastoral and psychological acuity could be forced by a drive for systematic consistency to inject the doctrine of inability into the consciousness of seekers struggling for assurance, instead of keeping it discreetly reserved for the nurture of believers.

Mather was, however, aware of the fact that inability was a doctrinal tool which was subject to easy and dangerous misuse in two opposing ways: either to excuse the rebellious from immediate repentance, or to oppress the regenerate with scruples. In a number of places he comments on the small number of practicing communicants in his audience, and seeks to encourage the faint-hearted and to spur the negligent on to the action of repentance.[1] He remains too cautious to abandon the emphasis on inability in his evangelism and simply press for immediate commitment in the style of later revivalists. But from the beginning of his ministry he does introduce a significant and increasing stress on the necessity of beginning the process of repentance without delay, and "making a trial" of one's ability to repent with divine enablement, with a hopeful prospect of success. In later years, especially, he stressed the responsibility of the sinner to begin the process of repentance immediately on hearing the summons of the evangelist, without the delay introduced by a passive waiting on God.[1]

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[1] His Monitor for Communicants (Boston, 1714), p. 4. states that less than half of the congregation engaged in the Lord's Supper. The same problem persisted from the beginning of his ministry to its end; cf. his Several Sermons Concerning Walking with God (Boston, 1689), p. 21; Winter Piety (Boston, 1712), p. 22; Virtue in its Verdure (Boston, 1725), p. 16.

Perry Miller has interpreted this stress on volitional response in Mather's preaching as part of his supposed shift toward rationalism, or at least Arminianism.[2] In consonance with his interpretation of the mutation of the Federal Theology away from high Calvinism, he suggests that the preparation formulas which the early Puritans used to safeguard divine sovereignty were turned by the Mathers into a bridge toward the expansion of the limits of human ability. It is certainly true that Cotton Mather is at times indistinguishable in tone from Arminian evangelism. He employs the analogy of Christ's healing the man with the withered hand in the way still regularly used by modern revivalists, to encourage the hearer to try to "stretch out his hand" in exercising the will to repentance.[3] He invites potential converts to "open the door of their hearts" on the basis of Rev. 3:20, another favorite test of Post-Finneyan revivalism.[4] The speaking of a single word, he says, is all that is needed to close the contract between the soul and Christ.[5] Mather plainly seeks to combine the teaching of inability with exhortations to action.

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[1] Vide his Agreeable Admonitions (Boston, 1703) ; The Spirit of Life Entering into the Spiritually Dead (Boston, 1707); Pastoral Desires (Boston, 1712); The Converted Sinner (Boston, 1724); Nails Fastened (Boston, 1726); Signatus (Boston, 1727).

[2] Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), pp. 66-7, 214-15.

[3] The motif is present quite early in his ministry; cf. his Unum Necessarium (Boston, 1693), p. 89.

[4] C. Mather, Hades Look'd Into (Boston, 1717), pp. 28-29; C. Mather, The Marrow of the Gospel (Boston, 1727), p. 24.

[5] C. Mather, The True Riches (Boston, 1724), p. 24; The Mystical Marriage (Boston, 1728), p. 7.

> You cannot Repent, you cannot Believe, of your selves; yet make some *essay* to *Repent* and *Believe*, in hopes that the Pity of the Most High may help you go through with it.[1]

> You may make a Tryal. There can be no hurt in *trying*, whether you can *turn and live*, or no . . . There is at least, a who knoweth? There is a, *who can tell?* of Salvation for you.[2]

The encouragement to "make a Tryal" is not, as Miller suggests, an effort to retain nominal orthodoxy while shifting to practical Arminianism; it is a perfectly consistent, if paradoxical, approach much like that of early Puritans such as Greenham. Mather repeatedly stresses the bare paradox of the Calvinist understanding of freedom and responsibility: "Tis very true, That GOD *Commands us* to *Turn* unto Himself, . . . but it is also True, that we are *unable* to *Turn* ourselves."[3] The structure of the points in *The Quickened Soul* (1720), which seeks to establish the doctrine that *Those unable to fulfill God's commands should yet try*, is a good summary of Mather's thinking on the matter: (1) God commands the impossible (conversion); (2) until He enables, we are impotent, and should realize this; (3) our inability is no excuse, however; (4) and therefore we ought to try to turn.[4] Inability, in Mather's understanding, is moral in nature; the sinner's "*Cannot* is a Will not,"[5] an inevitable but wilful refusal to turn. But although inability is a voluntary loss of power, it involves the unregenerate in an absolute bondage of the will:

> Indeed, the Natural and Essential *Freedom of our Will*, remains unto us; it wills *freely*, whenever it *Wills* at all: but alas, 'tis no

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[1] C. Mather, *Batteries upon the Kingdom of the Devil* (London, 1695), p. 36.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 108.

[3] C. Mather, *The Converted Sinner* (Boston, 1724), p. 14.

[4] C. Mather, *The Quickened Soul* (Boston, 1720), *passim*.

[5] C. Mather, *The Spirit of Life Entering into the Spiritually Dead* (Boston, 1707), p. 36.

> better than, Free among the dead: only Dead Works are grateful to the Will of the Unregenerate: his Will, as well as the rest of his whole Soul, is corrupted in him.[1]

Nevertheless, Mather felt it was both rational and biblical to encourage his audience to "make a Tryal" at repentance and faith, for several reasons. Part of the design of his approach is to leave the unconverted without excuse, since he is responsible to turn and culpable if he does not try:

> You must Confess that you cannot Quicken & Convert your selves. . . . But still, there are some things that you can do towards your own Quickening. Tis true, God has not bound Himself by Promise, That He will Quicken you, if you do those things. But who is to be blamed, if you ly Dead, as long as you Refuse to do those things?[2]

But Mather also encouraged efforts at conversion in order to discourage that passivity which he considered in improper logical deduction from the doctrine of inability: "You may rest Satisfied; There is no such Decree as This; That the Elect shall be Saved, whether they Work about their own salvation; or no . . . No; The Decree of the End, always includes a Decree of the Means."[3] Mather occasionally expresses a conviction, also, that an active seeking of salvation on the part of the inquirer may indicate that regeneration has already taken place, for "Faith is actually Begun in a Soul, that is made Sincerely Willing to Believe."[4] Here he sought to counterbalance the effect of the doctrine of inability of the segment of his congregation which was already regenerate but fearful and scrupulous.

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[1] C. Mather, Unum Necessarium (Boston, 1693), p. 41

[2] C. Mather, The Spirit of Life Entering into the Spiritually Dead (Boston, 1707), p. 20.

[3] C. Mather, Free-Grace (Boston, 1706), p. 37.

[4] Ibid., p. 66.

Whenever he has this audience in mind, he speaks with the voice of Sibbes, Preston, and John Cotton, encouraging believers to rest content with their mustard-seeds of repentant faith; but when he turns to address the apathetic majority, he thunders with the voice of Shepard, insisting on a thorough and arduous ploughing of the soul.[1]

In addressing this other group in his audience which misused the doctrine of inability, those who excused themselves from the necessity of repentance because they were unable, Mather moves very close to a gratia de congruo solution: "If men did in Religion, more than they do, & All that they could by a Natural Power do, there would be a greater Likelihood, (I say not, a Certainty, but a Likelihood,) that God would grant them the Higher Power; they would be more in the likely way, of Coming to a Saviour."[2] But elsewhere he explicitly repudiates congruent grace as a theoretical position: "A sinner can indeed so little Convert himself, that he can't so far Dispose himself to Conversion, as that God should be obliged, by his well-improving of Common Grace, to bestow Saving Grace upon him."[3] It is true that there are certain other statements in Mather which have a vaguely Pelagian flavor to them. He insists, for example, that repentance becomes "more difficult" if it is delayed, because the corruption of the will becomes increasingly irreversible. Satan's dominion over the soul is enlarged, and God abandons the soul to a penal blindness.[4] It would seem that a logical orthodoxy, operating with the doctrines of irresistable grace and the total deadness of the unregenerate soul, would assume that the conversion of an old sinner is no more a miracle than that of a young one. But Mather departs from this strict conclusion not merely because of pastoral experience and common sense, but because there is a paradoxical strand in the scripture which supports his construction.

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[1] If encouraging men to "make a tryal" is indeed a movement toward theoretical Arminianism, then Increase Mather is involved in the same shift, for his Soul-Saving Gospel Truths (Boston, 1703) incorporates most of his son's emphases. Probably the Mather's worked together in developing a corrective to the hypercalvinist component in the spiritual decline.

[2] C. Mather, A Conquest Over the Grand Excuse (Boston, 1706), p. 29.

[3] C. Mather, The Armour of Christianity (Boston, 1704), p. 142.

[4] C. Mather, Several Sermons Concerning Walking with God (Boston, 1689), p. 86; Agreeable Admonitions (Boston, 1703), p. 18; Nails Fastened (Boston, 1726), p. 9; Ignorantia Scientifica (Boston, 1727), p. 22.

Taken in context, Mather's statements on this issue are not those of a crypto-Arminian clinging to technical orthodoxy by a thread. He firmly believes in inability, and he places the soul's realization of his truth near the center of the conversion experience; for "The Gospel Reveals to me, His Grace in dying for Sinners, and my sin in my not Believing on Him, and my inability to believe."[1] A man who includes as part of the good news the knowledge that one cannot respond to it without divine assistance surely can be marked as a whole-hearted believer in the doctrine of inability. It is therefore not the case that Mather was moving toward a theoretical expansion of the limits of human ability; his only departures from orthodoxy are made in the interests of his pastoral concerns and his desire to be biblical rather than systematically consistent. Perry Miller's analysis misreads Mather as an Arminian because it does not take into account the problem of Puritan hypercalvinism which he was unconsciously seeking to counterbalance. Mather's error was not Pelagianism; it was his retention of his tradition, which thrust the sinner's inability into the foreground of evangelism. Mather did all he could to mitigate the dangerous side-effects of this treatment, but he never questioned that the medicine must be administered to the believer, and at the very outset of his spiritual life.

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[1] C. Mather, The Man of God Furnished (Boston, 1708), p. 27.

4. The Problem of Election and Salvation by Faith

The potential for dangerous side-effects in Puritan evangelism was not localized in the doctrine of inability. Perhaps even more perilous in the long run was the systematic insistence on exhibiting predestination to the potential convert. Most Puritans acknowledged that God was under no obligation to accept any applicant for His mercy, and that He might justly turn away some as reprobates. In attempted loyalty to Calvin, however, they did something with this theoretical possibility which Calvin would never have done: in order to magnify divine grace, they constantly reminded the seeker that he might be rejected, that his strivings might be the result of mere common grace. Consequently it required more than the general promises of the gospel to assure the convert of acceptance: he needed either strong behavioral proof of his sanctification, or a powerfully infused conviction of his election, given through an emotional or mystical assurance of God's mercy.

There is no doubt that if a convert could weather the agonizing uncertainties of the period of application during which he cried out for such direct assurance, he emerged with a considerable depth of faith, convinced of the graciousness of divine mercy and kindled to an extraordinary degree of experiential consciousness of God. On the other hand, the quicksands of subjectivity involved in this practice swallowed up many a soul in despair. The Puritan formula of conversion here seized upon a severe spiritual illness, the _tentatio praedestinationis_, which had effected the deepening of certain lives in the realities of grace -- Luther's, for example -- and made it a standardized process through which every Puritan convert must pass; and many constitutions could not bear it. Two of the great Puritan pastors, Paul Baynes and Richard Greenham, died in despair of their salvation after productive lives of declaring the gospel.[1] Though he admired the sufferers of despair as spiritual heroes, Cotton Mather was aware that the Puritan handling of election could on occasion be the cause of their illness. He is critical of the wounding quality of Thomas Shepard's *The Sincere Convert*, though he admires the author's later work, *The Sound Believer*.[2] Yet his own approach is again a matter of retaining the traditional doctrine but striving to ameliorate its difficulties. His *Free-Grace* (1706) is an apology for the retention of the received tradition. Mather here conceives of himself as defending Calvin against Arminius.

> The Illustrious Doctrine of Predestination, Some that Profess the Belief of it, very Sinfully *Pervert* it, as if it were a Doctrine Calculated, either for the *Security*, or for the *Discouragement* of them who should be brought unto *Repentance*; to make Sinful Men either *Presumptuous* or *Desperate*, Whereupon the Doctrine is decried as if it were an *Useless*, yea, and an *Hurtful* Doctrine, and as if it were best of all, never to meddle with it. A Glorious Doctrine of Christianity, has been *crucifyed* between two thieves.[3]

Mather admits that misuse of this doctrine has reached endemic proportions in New England, for "It is a Folly, which we daily see Raging among us, it Stabs the Souls of Multitudes [who] . . . accuse the Predestination of God as the cause of their Impenitent unbelief."[4] A good part of Mather's audience was using election to excuse their passive apathy. Mather counters with the common answer that the decree of election always involves a decree of active striving for salvation.[5] Turning to the other side of the problem, despair among serious believers, Mather does not mention the possibility that such individuals might already be converted, but merely tells the disturbed soul to look on the positive side:

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[1] H. C. Porter, *Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge* (Cambridge, England, 1958), pp. 218, 227.

[2] C. Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, I (Hartford, 1855), 389-90.

[3] C. Mather, *Free-Grace* (Boston, 1706), pp. 1-2.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 33.

[5] *Ibid*., p. 37.

> Sinner, Thou dost not know, but that there are Thoughts of Mercy, yet in the Heart of the Blessed GOD concerning thee . . . Many of the Elect of God, have been left unto all the horrid abominations that have made thy soul so Desolate . . . Who can tell? No man alive can tell, but thou . . . O worst in all the Black Tribe of Sinners, Thou mayest by One of These.[1]

This falls short of the ringing evangelical declaration which a later Arminian revivalist could make. Similarly, when Mather deals with the temptation to believe that one has committed the 'unpardonable sin,' he merely states that to conclude oneself reprobate is itself a great sin, for we can be sure in this life if we are elect, but never that we are reprobate.[2] This is a gesture of help to the agonized convert, but again it offers comfort only from a possibility. But Mather does contrive to neutralize the Limited Atonement with the general offer of the gospel: "However Limited soever the Efficacy of our Lords Blood so may be, in the Secret Purpose of God; There is in the Blood of our Lord Redeemer, such a Sufficiency, as to Cleanse every one of us all from all our Sin, if we come unto it."[3] He then proceeds to a statement which plunges to the limits of Calvinism: "Nothing shall hinder thy Salvation by the Blood of the Lord JESUS CHRIST but thy wilful Refusing of it."[4] And then, like any later Arminian evangelist, he brings in a great text from John, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37, KJV), noting that this was an antidote much employed in Puritan evangelism before his time.[1]

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[1] Ibid., p. 35.

[2] Ibid., pp. 34-5.

[3] Ibid., p. 41.

[4] Ibid., p. 42. The same approach is employed in Increase Mather's Soul-Saving Gospel Truths (Boston, 1703), p. 20.

Mather makes an obvious attempt in other writings to alleviate the *tentatio predestinationis* by stressing the mercy of God. He tells a convicted pirate at the gallows, "You have not Sinned beyond the *Bounds* of a *Mercy* that has no *Bounds*."[2] On the other hand, in urging men to begin the process of repentance immediately without delay, Mather teaches that there is for every man a *terminus gratiae*, a point beyond which his petitions will not be heard by God because he has 'used up' his supply of grace.[3] Elsewhere, however, he observes that those who are worried that their day of grace is past are most certainly those who still have a prospect of mercy.[4] Here again pastoral necessities brought him into apparent self-contradiction: he felt he had to stress the *terminus gratiae* to rouse procrastinators to action, but this necessitated a constant administration of comfort to the scrupulous who wrongly appropriated this emphasis to themselves.

The greatest answer to the problem of despair is the consideration of the work of Christ, and Mather's Christocentrism is employed to particular advantage in meeting this problem.

> The discouraged soul may go on; *But if I come unto my Saviour, what a wretched and rueful Thing must I bring unto Him? A mind full of Errors; an heart that is Deceitful above all things, and desperately Wicked; a Soul over-run with the most filthy Leprosy; all sorts of Maladies and Abominations*. A Merciful SAVIOUR still says, *Come to me, and I will not cast thee out*. Oh! let it revive all the

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 43.

[2] C. Mather, *Instructions to the Living* (Boston, 1717), p. 10.

[3] C. Mather, *Agreeable Admonitions* (Boston, 1703), pp. 19-20; *Nails Fastened* (Boston, 1726), pp. 9-10. This peculiar Medieval doctrinal remnant was also employed by Spener and Francke; *vide* A. W. Nagler, *Pietism and Methodism* (Nashville, 1918), pp. 37-8.

[4] C. Mather, *Unum Necessarium* (Boston, 1693), p. 158.

> discouraged Souls in the Congregation of God. . . . He receiveth Sinners . . . Lo, I bring you a word from Him, and, Oh! may he set it home upon you! It is a word worth Mountain of Gold; that Word, Psal. CSLVII.II, The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His Mercy. . . . Oh! Despair not. You come to a SAVIOUR, who will bring it about, that God shall abundantly Pardon. Satan may tell you, The Day of Grace is over with you. Yet, Oh! Despair not . . . Satan may tell you, You have Sinned Unpardonably, yet, Oh! Despair not.[1]

This passage gives us a revealing glimpse of the amount and the kinds of spiritual illness which Puritan medicine produced even while it healed many. It does, however, promise mercy through Christ, and the same promise of mercy is extended in Zalmonah, where Mather makes use of the image of the brass serpent on the pole, promising the seeker that only a look of faith at the Christ, who has been lifted up as the Savior of all men, is sufficient for redemption.[2] But then he goes on to indicate that this look is not to be the single quick glance of insight into justification, it is to be a prolonged looking, a meditation on Christ. There is a strange tendency here for the sola fide of the Reformers to slip over into works quite like those prescribed by Ignatius Loyola. Mather elsewhere draws fine distinctions between works-righteousness and the effort necessary to appropriate salvation, and reduces the latter to a vanishing minimum:

> Whatever we Do, in the Covenant of grace . . . we must be sure to ascribe unto Grace, Free Grace, and rich Grace, the Honour of it all . . . When you go to make choice of the Great GOD for Your God . . . you must not attempt it in your own Strength; No, but ly at the Foot of Sovereign Grace, and say, 'Lord, I justly perish if I don't make choice of thee . . . Oh! but I never can do it, except thy Grace help me to do it! . . '. Engage nothing in your own Strength: Look on every Precept of the Covenants, as also a Promise; Let your whole Dependence be upon the Aids of Grace, which are promised in the Covenant.[3]

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[1] C. Mather, Utilia (Boston, 1716), pp. 13, 50.

[2] C. Mather, Zalmonah (Boston, 1725), pp. 72-106.

[3] C. Mather, The Duty of Children (Boston, 1703), pp. 20-21.

Yet there is a persistent intrusion of doing in the form of some kind of semi-meritorious action, even where the grace of God is most magnified:

> Indeed there is Nothing to be done by us, to merit our Salvation, But something must be done to secure our Salvation. Indeed there is nothing to be done by us, in our own strength. But something must be done by us, thro' Christ who strengthens us. More plainly. Our Blessedness now cometh not unto, us, on the Terms of a Covenant of works, 'Tis not properly our doings, that is the Condition of our Blessedness. We are to be Saved, by Taking rather than by Doing. The Condition is receive, and be saved. It is, approve, and be Saved. Or, Be willing to be Saved. We speak of Doing, in the Largest sense of the word; and we still say, Something must be done, that we may be Saved.[1]

Mather can define justification in perfectly classical Reformation terminology: "'Tis a Receiving of, and a Relying on, the gift of Righteousness from God, by our Lord Jesus Christ."[2] However it is obvious even in some of the citations above that the believer's dependence is not univocally fixed on the perfect righteousness of Christ received by imputation through faith, but is involved with a strong element of infused righteousness, upon which the conscience of the believer is painfully fixed, as he seeks to measure whether the belief he feels in his heart is merely a common-grace production of his own efforts, and not that special grace, infused from above, which alone can lead to redemption. It is not surprising therefore that in a list of qualifications for entering Heaven, an early work of Mather lists belief in the Name of Christ as fourth, following regeneration, subscription to God's Covenant, and interest in the Bible, all works of infused grace.[3] Seeking to maintain the balance between justification and sanctification, striving to avoid a dead orthodoxy substituting mental assent for faith and bare imputation for sanctification, Mather imperceptibly reverts to Medieval criteria for justification when he is dealing with the unawakened; although in other instances, with another audience, he speaks a purely Pauline language.

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[1] C. Mather, The Greatest Concern in the World (Boston, 1765 [1707]), pp. 10-11.

[2] C. Mather, The Everlasting Gospel (Boston, 1700), p. 16.

[3] C. Mather, Unum Necessarium (Boston, 1693), p. 122.

5. The Nature and Timing of Regeneration According to Mather

Ralph Bronkema has argued rather persuasively that the Puritans not only blurred the boundaries of justification and sanctification, which Mather appears to do in some of the instances above, but that they also confused regeneration with conversion. He argues that whereas for Calvin and classical Reformed theology regeneration is a sovereign recreation by God of the depths of the soul performed upon a passive object, followed by living faith involving active, conscious conversion as the fruit of this rebirth, Puritans located conversion (or preparatory strivings toward it) before faith in the _ordo salutis_, and failed to distinguish regeneration from either.[1]

These strictures do seem to apply to many Puritan writers, but not to all. Mather was clearer on this distinctions than many of his brethren. He insists on the priority of regeneration as a work of preventent grace in the depths of the soul which inclines a man to hear the call of the gospel and respond in repentance and faith.[2] It would seem that the problem here arises not merely from confusing terminology or lack of technical distinctions, but from the Puritan's extreme suspicion of psychological operations within himself which we might unhesitatingly identify as faith and repentance, but which he could not trust as evidences of a real regeneration. The problem is better defined by Peter De Jong as an exaggerated separation of the realms of nature and grace, so that ordinary moral and mental operations were relegated to the realm of common grace strivings unless detectably infused with the Spirit's presence.[1]

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[1] Ralph Bronkema, _The Essence of Puritanism_ (Goes, 1929), pp. 107-8, 120, 122, 124.

[2] C. Mather, _Unum Necessarium_ (Boston, 1693), pp. 19-22.

While Mather does not always precisely designate the initial transformation of the soul under the term *regeneration*, he often defines what he means by the rebirth of the soul: the implanting of "a *Principle*, inclining the soul to Fear God, and Prize Christ, and hate all *Sin*, and slight this *World*, and do all the *Good* we can to all about us, and *Look and Long* for the Glories of the *Heavenly World*."[2] In its inception, the regenerate principle may be only a seed of life; infused (as Bronkema says) with the origination of faith, but "if the grace to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ be infused into the soul, the habit of every other grace is at the same instant infused."[3] It thus involves a total reconstruction of human nature, predisposing the soul to respond in conversion:

> REGENERATION *is a Real and Thorough Change, wrought by the Holy Spirit, in a Fallen Man, through the Infusion of a Gracious Principle into him, which Restores in him, the Lost Image of God, and therewithal Inclines him to comply with the Calls of the Gospel*. . . . Indeed, the *Substance* of one Soul is not Removed or Dissolved in *Regeneration*, and the *Substance* of another Introduced . . . but the *Crookedness* and *Wickedness* thereof is Rectified in *Regeneration*; the Metal of the Soul Remains *Old* for the *Sort* of it, but becomes *New* for the Stamp of it; not is a *New Faculty* added unto the Soul, but a *New* Quality unto the Faculty.[4]

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[1] Peter De Jong, *The Covenant Idea in New England Theology* (Grand Rapids, 1945), pp. 90, 107, 217.

[2] C. Mather, *Winter Piety* (Boston, 1712), p. 29; cf. *The Curbed Sinner* (Boston, 1713), p. 15.

[3] C. Mather, *The Greatest Concern in the World* (Boston, 1765 1707), p. 16.

[4] C. Mather, *Unum Necessarium* (Boston, 1693), pp. 7-8.

Such a nature is not motivated by a drive toward satisfaction in self, creatures or idols, but primarily delights in obeying and enjoying God.[1]

> A True *Conversion* to PIETY is one that will reach to every *Faculty* of the Heart. The *New Creature* in the Converts of *Zion* is *Perfect*, in that it has *every part* tho' the *Renovation* be put *in part*. A Young Person brought home to GOD has his *Understanding* Enlightened his *Phantasy Regulated*, his *Memory* Purified, his *Will* Rectified, his Affections brought under order, he gives up his *whole heart* unto GOD, he reserves no *Powers* of his *Mind*, but concerning all of them he says, Oh! let my Savior take possession of it.[2]

The new man thus created draws his life from a supernatural union with Christ, for regeneration involves the entrance of the Holy Spirit into the life, who will "*renew a right Spirit* in them; will *Purify their Heart* by a *Faith* of His Working there; will make them the *Temples* of GOD. The Holy SPIRIT will *write his Laws* in their Heart, and *Rectify* all Disorders there, & bring all things to rights within them."[3] Mather allows for an expression of the regenerate nature which is less full and perfect than this, in which the regenerate soul is slumbering or backslidden:

> They that have *Everlasting Life* begun in their Souls, yet may have it ly, as if their Souls were in a Swoon. *The Habits of Grace* are there; and the *Acts* would soon appear upon a due Excitation: but they are not exercised as they ought to be. It is true, when the *Children of GOD* are at the Worst, and the truly Pious are most Asleep, still their Souls *cleave unto GOD*. Still their Deliberate Choice is this; *Thou art my Portion, O Lord*; *I have said, That I will keep thy words*. 'Tis this; *A Glorious* CHRIST, *is my Life, and my All*; *my spirit rejoyces in God my Saviour*. Still they deliverately choose *Eternal* Blessings before Temporal ones, *Heavenly* blessings before *Terrestrial* ones. A Course of sin still appears to them Dangerous and Odious; but a *Godly* and a *Sober* and a *Righteous* Life infinitely Reasonable; infinitely preferable. Nevertheless, there is an unhappy *Sleep*, whereto the *Children of GOD* are Liable.[4]

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[1] C. Mather, *Sincere Piety Described* (Boston, 1719), p. 6.

[2] C. Mather, *What the Pious Parent Wishes for* (Boston, 1721), p. 6.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 18

[4] C. Mather, *Vigilius* (Boston, 1719), p. 10.

Such conditions at their worst seem to the modern reader astronomically advanced beyond the spiritual acuity of the average church member. But like the Anabaptists and the modern fundamentalist, Mather does not hesitate to brand the majority of professing Christians as counterfeit.

> 'Tis a Similitude that hath been sometimes used, The soldiers tooke the Coat of Christ, & Four of them cast Lots for it, but only One of the Four did obtain it. So sayes One, scarce One in Four of those are called Christians, do obtain that Spiritual and Illustrious Garment, the Righteousness of Christ, for their own; and then, they have none at all.[1]

The harsh appearance of this is mitigated, however, when we recognize that Mather was summoning his audience to a detectable degree of genuine and humble sainthood, for he had little use for common standards of goodness resting in self-righteousness: "I know we have a sort of Good People, that have no Goodness in them. We flatter them, that they are to Live with us in Heaven, tho' none cou'd Live near them on Earth. I can be none of their Flatterers."[2]

Quite evidently, then, Mather, in company with most Puritans, does not regard the grace of regeneration as inevitably tied to the sacrament of baptism. The waters of baptism convey only a promise of Heaven to those dying in infancy, and of a gracious environment in which covenant faith can be exercised in those who survive to rationality. He describes regeneration (again under the term conversion) as normally wrought through the instrumentality of the Word by the Spirit:

> He Exerts a twofold Efficiency. There is a Moral Efficiency; and there is a Vital Efficiency. There is a Calling of the Sinner to Repent; and there is a Causing of the Sinner to Repent. The Spirit of GOD first of all treats us in a Moral way, which is adapted unto the Rational Frame of our Sould. He Instructs us, He Exhorts us, He

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[1] C. Mather, The Everlasting Gospel (Boston, 1700), p. 41.

[2] C. Mather, Desiderius (Boston, 1719), p. 7.

> uses all sorts of *Arguments* with us to Return unto God. But this is not *all* that He does: This Alone will never do. Wherefore He deals with us also as with Creatures that have lost the *life* of our *Faculties*, in the matters of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. In a *Vital* way, He *changes* us, *He Renews* us, He *Strengthens* us. He gives a Real *Change* to the very *Tempers* of our Souls! He does not only *Urge* us to Live, but also Make us to Live. Now this is done *Immediately* by the *Spirit* of GOD. It can be done by none but the Arm of *Omnipotency*. Tis a *Creation*; it can be done by nothing but the *Creating Power* of GOD . . . It is the Good Pleasure of God, that in the *Moral Work* of the *Spirit*, for the *Conversion* of a Sinner, the *Gospel* should be His *Instrument*. So, for the Dividing of the Red-Sea, *Moses's* Rod must be lifted up . . . When the *Spirit* of GOD *Converts* us, He deals not with us, as with Stocks and Stones, that have no *Reason* in them. He deals with us as with *Men*; *Drawes* us with the *Cords of a Man*. *Reasons* with us by His *Gospel*, and sets before us the *Great Things* thereof in the highest Light of *Reason* imaginable. Tis true, Tis not enough to Enlighten our *Understandings*: Our *Wills* must be Rectified, as well as our *Understandings* Enlightened. Yet the *Spirit* of God accomodates Himself to our *Nature*, when He brings us into a State of *Grace*.[1]

On the other hand, Mather quite evidently does conceive of regeneration coming in some instances without the "moral efficiency" of the Word, in the case of deaf and dumb persons, and elect infants dying before the age of rationality.[2] In a sense, this case might even be considered normative, since Mather felt that "no doubt there are more *Spirits* of *Infants* in *Heaven*, than *Saints* of any other Age."[3] He also leans toward the possibility that most elect children of covenant lines are regenerated quite early in their experience, perhaps before the time when they might rationally comprehend the Word.

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[1] C. Mather, *The Spirit of Life Entering into the Spiritually Dead* (Boston, 1707), pp. 13-15. As Trinterud indicates, the Puritan theory of conversion makes use of the rationalistic faculty psychology of the period, which is displayed in this quotation. There was, however, a considerable modification of this scheme through the element of supernatural enlightenment and enlivening of the Spirit in the priority of regeneration, imposed on it by the Puritans. *Vide* L. Trinterud, *The Forming of an American Tradition* (Philadelphia, 1949), p. 187.

[2] C. Mather, *A Letter to Ungospellized Plantations* (Boston, 1702), p. 12.

[3] D. Mather, *Meat Out of the Eater* (Boston, 1703), p. 98.

> I have observed the Children of our Faithful, when they grow up, to prove, many of them, Serious, gracious, devout Children. And tho' they may when they come to be a dozen years old, or so, backslide from God into many Vanities, and Levities, yet a great part of them Return to God . . . There is cause to think, That very many of the Children which grow up to maturity, were *Sanctified* in their *Infancy*. A principle of *Godliness* as well as a principle of *Reason*, may be infused into the Souls of *Infants*, before their Age render them capable of Exercizing, or Discovering it . . . And I will say this further. Many whom we *Baptize* in their *Infancy*, do not prove *Real Saints* when they grow up; and many whom you *Baptize* when they are grown up, do prove by their Apostasies, that they are not *Real Saints*. A *Judgment of Rational Charity* may be left for *others*, tho' *some* do not answer our Charitable Expectations.[1]

Mather in one instance sounds rather strikingly like Horace Bushnell:

> Would *Parents* thus conscienciously do their *Duty* to their *Children* . . . the *Children* belonging to the *Election of Grace*, would be so brought home to GOD by the *Parental Ministry*, and have the Fear of GOD so gradually and effectually insinuated into them, that your *Pastors* would have little to do, but *Instruct*, and *Confirm*, and *Edify* such as have already been Converted unto serious PIETY, and as it were *suck'd it in with their Mothers Milk*, and in a way that would leave them unable to tell the *Time* of their *First Conversion*.[2]

It is quite evident, then, that Mather had a clear distinction in his mind between regeneration and conscious conversion, whatever his terminological confusion may have been. But if the ideal to be aimed at was an insensible regeneration occurring in infancy, how can we reconcile this goal with the Puritan insistence on a conscious process of repentance?[3] The answer that suggests itself is this: that while Puritans acknowledged that Christians could be regenerated by God without any of the particular searchings and strivings they prescribed, they held to preparation because it was to them inescapably an adjunct of assurance of salvation. The covenant seed might indeed be regenerate from their earliest years, but the only way this regeneracy could be tested and known to themselves and the rest of the covenant community was through their eventual entrance into wrestlings with God, followed by the comfortable persuasion of their election.

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[1] C. Mather, *Baptistes* (Boston, 1705), p. 17.

[2] C. Mather, *Baptismal Piety* (Boston, 1727), p. 46. Mather observed, however, that most of those baptized were called to awakened faith between the ages of 15 and 30; *vide Magnalia Christi Americana*, II (Hartford, 1855), 374.

[3] This inconsistency was noted by Giles Firmin in *The Real Christian* (1670); *vide* Pettit, *The Heart Prepared* (New Haven, 1966), p. 187.

6. Assurance of Regeneration

And thus we return to what we have already designated as the most important cause of the Puritan loading of conversion: the desire for assurance of salvation. In emerging from his own agony of doubt, Luther had powerfully contradicted the Medieval semipelagianism system by asserting that assurance was the birthright of a healthy Christian. He had grounded that assurance solely on a bare faith in the atoning work of Christ, although he did make the balancing thrust that this may be a living faith active in love. Calvin, concerned about the generation of presumption, had cautioned against trying to determine one's election too strictly, and yet had hazarded a few clues by which we might guess at our regeneracy: faith in the justifying work of Christ, followed by sanctification.[1] Part of the essential dynamic of Puritan spirituality lay in its returning Luther's insistence on achieved assurance, while developing Calvin's criteria into an involved casuistry.

The Hutchinson conflict in the 1630's, which was a watershed for the issue of preparation, was also determinative for the later New England views on assurance. Richard Sibbes had leaned away from the Puritan casuistry of assurance and had sought to direct the convert's attention away from the problem of his election and to fix it on the Redeemer, as Staupitz had counselled Luther to find release from his despair in the wounds of Christ.[1] John Cotton, following Sibbes, felt that reliance on internal 'marks of regeneration' for assurance was presumptuous and untrustworthy and tended toward the establishment of a "covenant of works." He did not, however, propose to replace these only with a bare faith apprehending the grace of Christ through faith, but stressed above all the direct assurance available to the believer through the interior witness of the Spirit.[2] The opposition was fearful of the possibility of Antinomian abuse of this subjective approach, and insisted on the retention of objective criteria as counterbalances, chiefly the inspection of biblically determined marks of regeneration in the inner and outward life. Subsequent positions made uneasy efforts to recombine these components, with some objectivists taking the extreme position which denied not only the witness of the Spirit but also his personal indwelling in the believer.[3]

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[1] Cf. E. S. Morgan, Visible Saints (New York, 1963), pp. 67, 72.

Standing near the end of this development, Mather continued to place a heavy stress on assurance, since he felt that "a true Child of GOD can be at no Peace, till he has found out whether he be indeed a Child of GOD."[1] He considered assurance to be an essential incentive to godliness rather than an occasion for licentiousness,[2] and he believed that God may allow trials and accusations of insincerity until the uncertain believer is actually forced to press through to a settled confidence.[3] Reading between the lines of Mather's work, however, we get a definite intimation that while a state of assurance was considered normative for New England Christians, it was by no means normal. Mather remarks that in many cases a full assurance was not given until the saint was on his deathbed.[4] Also he indicates that assurance was a somewhat perishable commodity, that those who have it should keep on earnestly praying that it will continue to be with them.[5] We have already commented on the size of the literature in Mather and others designed to cure despair and despondency. It was not only the laity who were afflicted; many spiritual leaders endured recurrent bouts of despair because they could find neither works of grace nor the Spirit's presence in their souls. Mather himself, in the Magnalia, mentions the gifts Hooker had for handling such cases, and points to afflicted members of the clergy such as Nathanael Rogers, Richard Mather, and Nathanael Mather.[6]

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[1] Larzer Ziff, The Career of John Cotton (Princeton, 1962), pp. 119, 153-4; cf. Emery Battis, Saints and Sectaries (Williamsburg, Va., 1962), pp. 20, 35.

[2] L. Ziff, The Career of John Cotton (Princeton, 1962), p. 110; Emery Battis, Saints and Sectaries (Williamsburg, Va., 1962), p. 30.

[3] Cf. Calvin S. Malefyt, "The Changing Concept of Pneumatology in New England Trinitarianism, 1635-1755" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 1966). Malefyt develops a threefold typology to cover the two extremes and the central systhesis: he speaks of Enthusiasts, Formalists, and Evangelicals, and speculates that the Unitarian stream in the eighteenth century developed out of the Formalist party, which insisted that assurance could only be indirect and ruled out the personal indwelling of the Spirit and the possibility of direct communion with Him. Both Mathers were 'Evangelicals' in Malefyt's terminology, and 'enthusiasts' in the literal sense of the word; vide I Mather, Pray for the Rising Generation (Boston, 1678), p. 7. Malefyt calls John Cotton an 'Evangelical Spiritualist,' and this label is not inappropriate for the Mathers.

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[1] C. Mather, Sincere Piety Described (Boston, 1719), p. 18.

[2] C. Mather, The Marrow of the Gospel (Boston, 1727), p. 14.

[3] C. Mather, The Right Way to Shake Off a Viper (Boston, 1711), p. 11.

[4] C. Mather, Nunc Dimittis (Boston, 1709), p. 17.

[5] C. Mather, Speedy Repentance Urged (Boston, 1690), p. 27.

[6] C. Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana, I (Hartford, 1855), 175, 334, 346, 415, 451.

But an examination of Mather's teaching on assurance indicates that although he was aware of the drawbacks inherent in all the Puritan theories of assurance, and sought to compensate for these, he hesitated to move away from introspection as an essential technique. Mather's treatment of this issue falls in the main tradition of New England, mediating between direct assurance by the Spirit (the so-called *syllogismus mysticus*) and indirect assurance through inspection of marks of grace (the *syllogismus practicus*). He does seem however to give especially clear treatment to Cotton's side of the case, and the stress on the Spirit's direct assurance may predominate somewhat especially in his later writings. In his treatment of the Hutchinson case in the *Magnalia*, he repudiates the position of the sectaries, especially in its extreme form in which assurance was by immediate revelation apart from the Word. He does, however, give a qualified approval to the milder statement of Cotton that "the Spirit of God by a powerful application of a promise" assures us, if it is taken in conjunction with objective evidences in sanctification: "The truth might easily have united *both* of these persuasions."[1] A harmony of these approaches is seen in an anti-Quaker tract principally drafted by Mather and signed by the other Boston ministers, which denies the reliability of a totally subjective 'witness of the Spirit,' but insists that the Holy Spirit uses the Scripture in assuring us, and that His witness coinheres with ours as we examine ourselves on the basis of biblical marks of grace.[2] But Mather seems to have the same kind of distrust of reliance on logical conclusion from objective evidence that his grandfather Cotton had; he says that "when we set ourselves to argue our *justification*, from the marks of our *sanctification* that we can find upon ourselves, we do *well* . . . But yet we cannot well see our sanctification, except a special operation of the spirit of God help our sight."[1] In a late work devoted specifically to the subject of assurance, Mather analyzes the phrase in Rom. 8:16, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit," and breaks down the ground of assurance into a double witness: the testimony of our own self-examination, and the testimony of the Holy Spirit, reinforcing our reasoning, giving a direct light to the mind, bringing peace and joy, and leaving a bias toward holiness in the heart.[2] Mather frequently stresses that without the second testimony, the first will be worth little to us.

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[1] C. Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, II (Hartford, 1855), 508. Mather approves here of Cotton's conclusion that "all the strife ..... was about magnifying the grace of God; the one person seeking to advance the grace of God *within* us, as to sanctification; and another person seeking to advance the grace of God *towards* us, as to justification."

[2] C. Mather, *Adversus Libertinos* (Boston, 1713), p. 40.

> The *Testimony* of our *own Spirit*, unto our *Adoption* from the *Marks* and *signs* of it, will go but poorly on, if the *Holy* SPIRIT come not in with His *Aids*, to show us to ourselves: and make His *Marks* and *Signs* become Visible unto us . . . We shall still remain In Doubt, whether it be not a *Deceitful* work, or any other than the *Hope of the Hypocrite*, except the Holy SPIRIT clear it up unto us, That it is a *Good Work* which he has begun in us.[3]

The confirming 'seal' of the Holy Spirit's operation in assurance is described in the most exalted mystical encounter with God:

> There is a *Discursive Assurance* . . . And then there is a more *Intuitive Assurance* of it; in which the Holy SPIRIT, more Immediately, and most Irresistably, and with a *Mighty Light*, bears in upon the Mind of the Beleever, a powerful persuasion of it, That he is a *child* of GOD, and his GOD and *Father* will one day bring him to *Inherit all things*. The Soul of the Beleever is now wonderfully moved and melted, and overpowered with such Thoughts as these; *GOD in my Father, Christ is my Savior, and I have an Inheritance in the Heavens reserved for me* . . . The Holy SPIRIT now mightily *Irradiates* our Minds, in causing us to dissolve into Tears of Gladness at the

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[1] C. Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, I (Hartford, 1855), 432.

[2] C. Mather, *Signatus* (Boston, 1727), *passim*.

[3] C. Mather, *Signatus* (Boston, 1727), p. 15.

> Tidings, He says unto us, Be comforted, Thy sins are forgiven thee! . . . Inexpressible is the Peace, and Joy, and Satisfaction of the beleever, when the Testimony of the Holy SPIRIT comes into satisfy him.[1]

It is not surprising that this kind of assurance is relatively infrequent. Mather admits that "there are very Few, very Few, among us, that enjoy a strong Testimony of the Holy SPIRIT unto their Adoption of God, or have an undoubting Assurance that though GOD was Angry with them, His Anger is turned away from them."[2] This is why there are so few who partake in communion, Mather notes; and of those who do, "How many can come no otherwise than Trembling, like the poor Woman that came to touch the Fringe of our SAVIOUR'S Mantle? . . . How few have a Soul Rejoicing in the Hope of the Glory of GOD? In what Bondage are they still kept by the Fear of Death?"[3] Mather asks himself the reason for this endemic sickness, and concludes that it is due to a general neglect of the Puritan casuistry of assurance! But the fusion of Cotton's direct assurance with the inspection of internal marks has hardly alleviated the burden of the seeker; it has rather set a heavier weight of dubious subjectivism on his shoulders, as he is compelled to regard as normative for his own case the "inexpressible irradiations" which Mather experienced in his ecstasies.

The objective marks which Mather instructs believers to look for are generally located deep in the wellsprings of human motivation. In Menachem (1716) he lists four signs: a turning in the soul's bias from idols to God, a universal zeal for Christ's work, a sense of being always under the eye of God and so in fear of Him, and a willingness to take up the Cross.[4]

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[1] C. Mather, Signatus (Boston, 1727), p. 16.

[2] Ibid., p. 23.

[3] Ibid., p. 25.

[4] C. Mather, Menachem (Boston, 1716), pp. 16-22.

Elsewhere he speaks of a disposition to sacrifice all earthly goals for that of glorifying God;[1] a total commitment to sanctification in every realm of life;[2] or a total control of the thoughts in obedience to Christ. So central is the problem of assurance to all Mather's preaching, however, that in dealing with almost any subject he is likely to throw out observations on various minor signs which may chime in to confirm regeneration, such as a man's engaging in secret prayer,[3] or even his singing hymns in the proper manner.[4] Contrary to the Weber thesis, Mather never, in all the mass of his preaching and writing, points to prosperity as a sign of election; on the contrary, in one place he cites a proper submission to poverty as a mark of assurance.[5] It is no wonder that Mather says that assurance grows with sanctification; it seems evident that no one who had not advanced well into holiness could get a clear sight of such graces in the cloudy caverns of the soul.

To compound the problem, Mather (at least when speaking to one kind of audience) advised the seeker to assume himself guilty of unregeneracy until issued a pardon directly from the hand of God.

> When you hear any Symptomes of _Hypocrisy_ mentioned, Enquire, Lord, _Is it I_? _Is it I_? And when you hear any Symptomes of _Integrity_, be extreamly uneasy, if you cannot find your own Souls affording of them. Yea, don't stay till these _Discominating Symptomes_ are

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[1] C. Mather, _Sincere Piety Described_ (Boston, 1719), p. 6.

[2] C. Mather, _Free-Grace_ (Boston, 1706), p. 9.

[3] C. Mather, _The Retired Christian_ (Boston, 1703), p. 24-26.

[4] C. Mather, _The Accomplished Singer_ (Boston, 1721), p. 12.

[5] C. Mather, _Seasonable Advice to the Poor_ (Boston, 1712), p. 9.

> brought unto you; but Go to them Call for them; Enquire after them . . . Do not Ordinarily go to Sleep at Night, without some Serious Thoughts on this Question . . . *Am I in Safety for Eternity*? . . . If you find any *Suspicious Marks* on yourselves, be ready to suspect the worst of yourselves . . . I will not positively and peremptorily say, Every Man is an *Hypocrite*, who has these *Marks* found upon him; Yet . . . 'Twill be best for such a Man to judge himself an Hypocrite . . . until he has got these Things cured in him.[1]

It is hard to understand how the author of this summons to hypochondria could be a critic of Thomas Shepard. Particularly bad signs according to Mather were the complacent indulgence in any habitual gross sin, or a continued aversion to any one point of godliness.[2] On the other hand, Mather could invert this dictum with the greatest ease to assure those who had been thrown into a case of scruples. In the *Companion for Communicants* (1690), an effort to activate the majority of the congregation who were abstaining from the Lord's Supper because of lack of assurance, he says that those who are fearful have the most cause to assume their salvation, for "these *Fears* . . . *are like Thistles*, *a Bad Weed*, *but growing in Good Ground*. Indeed they commonly grow most in that *ground*, where there is least *ground* for their Growth, and it is because *Good Hearts* do too much Nourish and Indulge them."[3] The timorous are to come to the table if they have the least grain of faith, and "a *Grief* is a *Grain* . . . a *Groan* is a *Grain*."[4] Mather comes within a hair's breadth of Stoddard's position, for "Assurance is not Absolutely Necessary in order to a *worthy Coming* unto the Holy Supper. We are to *Examine* ourselves, and if on the *Examination*, we do not find full cause to pronounce ourselves *Unregenerate*, we are to come, tho' we have many Fears, whether we be indeed Regenerate or not."[1] In the beautiful sermon called An Heavenly Life: A Christian Taught How to Live in an Infallible & Comfortable Perswasion of the Divine Love, Mather states that if the seeker's heart rejoices at the thought that God loves him, then he is indeed elected by God.[2] Mather recurs often to the case of the person with weak faith, agreeing with Perkins and Sibbes that not the quantity of the faith present but its quality is the important factor.

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[1] C. Mather, *The Tryed Professor* (Boston, 1719), pp. 9-10.

[2] C. Mather, *Parentator* (Boston, 1724), p. 223.

[3] C. Mather, *A Companion for Communicants* (Boston, 1690), p. 129.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 131.

> This Faith is very weak, in many that have it begun in their Souls . . . It is often so, that a Spark of Grace may lye, and live, in a Sea of Corruption . . . The Soul, which has been truly Renewed by the Grace of GOD, may have Indwelling Sin, with so much Strength oppressing of it, that the better principle shall be scarce discernible. In some truly Regenerate souls, the struggles between the Spirit and the Flesh are so dubiously managed, that one will have much ado to say, which overcomes.[3]

Mather often makes the point that no one who is concerned about his spiritual state can be outside the pale of God's mercy; for it is "a golden sentence of antiquity: If God give the Grace of Desire, He will also give the Desired Grace."[1]

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[1] Ibid. But the hair's breadth of difference from Stoddard is significant. As Perry Miller has pointed out, Stoddard refused to lower his conception of the requirements for assurance, but was compelled by pastoral concern to bring the congregation to the Supper so that they might be lifted to meet his standard. Mather elects instead to lower the standard of assurance required, so that many may come. As a matter of fact, it has not been noted how nearly identical in practice are the approaches of Mather and Stoddard, despite their strife over converting ordinances; for in theory Mather could not turn any applicant away who was not outwardly scandalous, since it was his conviction that no man could be sure of his own reprobation, as we have said before. But this amounts to saying that all were invited to partake of the Supper! The controversy between the Mathers and Stoddard was then mainly about a technical point in theology, whether we should invite the hypothetically unregenerate as unregenerate to partake of the Supper; whereas the two approaches in practice must have worked out the same. Between the two, however, we must give the palm to Mather for greater logical and biblical consistency; Stoddard's thinking was a little crooked, though his practice was intuitively straight. (Vide Perry Miller, "Solomon Stoddard," Harvard Theological Review, XXXIV (1941), 277-300.)

[2] C. Mather, An Heavenly Life (Boston, 1719), p. 10.

[3] C. Mather, Utilia (Boston, 1716), pp. 171-2, 174, 175.

But in common with the early Puritans and even such non-Puritans as Andrewes,[2] Mather is still quite concerned to focus microscopically on the difference between common grace 'marks' and those evidences of regeneracy which are unmistakable fruits of special grace, in the manner of Shepard, and Edwards' treatise on the affections.

> A man whose Heart still is under the power of Sin, may yet visibly Reform, and Forsake every *Sin*; He may yet be Equal in his Dealings with his Neighbours, and *Sober* in his government of himself, and *Liberal* in his Alms to pious Uses. He may *Pray* constantly, with every kind of *Prayer*; and fast as well as *Pray*. He may spend the *Lord's-day* devoutly; and seriously approach to the Tables *of the Lord*. He may be very *Useful* to the Public, and Joyn himself unto the purest of Churches; and frequent the *Meetings* of the Faithful, and be at much pains for the *Conversion of others*, and *Suffer* many Things, and *Death* itself, in the Cause of Christianity. What shall I say? There may be many savory Frames in an Unregenerate man, and mighty pangs of Mourning and Fearing, and Joying, and Hoping, about the Affairs of the Eternal World; yea, and he may continue in these Frames all his days, and be in some sort of a *Religious* man, to his Dying Day. All this may a man do, and be but a *Pharisee* after all. There is no *Regenerate man*, that makes to himself a *Righteousness*, by any *Doings* of his own.[3]

But this case is no rare monstrosity, since "there is nothing more Common under the Means of Grace, than for *Common works* of Grace to be, through the Mysterious working of the Devil, mistaken for *Saving works*."[4] The matter is complicated by the possibility of unconscious self-deception, for "an *Hypocrite*, he may seem to Embrace CHRIST; And yet something of CHRIST he has an Aversion for; and he is not Aware of it."[5] The theological rationale for this stress is, of course, partially to harmonize the stress on permanent regeneration with the observed fact of apostasy, which is explained by the concept of common grace gifts; for "a man may be furnished with Miraculous Gifts, and yet the SPIRIT of God may afterwards totally withdraw from him. A man may taste of these Powers of the World to come, and may finally fall away after all."[1] The only way we can explain the justaposition of passages of such hair-raising ominousness with those of such gracious condescension is, once again, to consider the differing condition of the patients for whom Mather was prescribing. But what a perilous medicine chest the Puritan pastor used! - - it was the sort that had better be administered by the physician personally, for it could be deadly in the patient's hands.

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[1] C. Mather, *The City of Refuge* (Boston, 1716), p. 33.

[2] C. H. and K. George, *The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation* (Princeton, 1961), p. 42.

[3] C. Mather, *The Everlasting Gospel* (Boston, 1700), p. 29.

[4] C. Mather, *The Armour of Christianity* (Boston, 1704), pp. 103, 105.

[5] C. Mather, *The Tryed Professor* (Boston, 1719), p. 5.

7. Incentives to Conversion

The evangelistic technique of many Puritans and some later revivalists has left a deep allergy in the American spirit toward the use of 'hellfire and damnation' in motivating conversions. Christian educators have particularly complained about the psychological effect of this method on young children,[2] but other critics have observed that this was a desperate and ineffective technique even when used among adults, in an effort to halt the spiritual decline.[3] While Edwards is the figure most associated with this tendency in the popular mind, the use of negative eschatology in Mather's sermons is much more frequent than in his later colleague, and almost as prevalent as his appeals to go through the process of repentance. Perry Miller and Miss Winslow have both commented on Mather's grotesque imagery describing hell, and his use of the rhetorical device of calculating the duration of eternal torture and so driving home its fearfulness to the hearers.[1] Miller has also pointed to Mather's employment of his own feelings of imminent death as a dramatic tool to catch the congregation's attention,[2] for Mather is just as preoccupied with the approaching death of his hearers as he is with his own.

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[1] C. Mather, Christianity Demonstrated (Boston, 1710), p. 33.

[2] The original of this species was of course Horace Bushnell's Christian Nurture (New York, 1863); cf. Sanford Fleming, Children and Puritanism (New Haven, 1933).

[3] Peter De Jong, in The Covenant Idea in New England Theology (Grand Rapids, 1945), suggests that this straining for effect provoked an Arminian counteremphasis. Some other critics have defended the Puritans on this account: Miss Winslow feels that the emphasis on hell was not unbalanced, nor was it unnatural considering the ministers' biblical literalism (O. E. Winslow, Meetinghouse Hill, 1630-1783 [New York, 1952], p. 96); and

His use of these devices is part of an old homiletical tradition common to many other spiritual streams within the history of the church, especially in Patristic, Medieval, and Ignatian piety. In all these contexts the contemplation of 'the four last things' was employed to create an existential 'limit-situation' in the mind of the hearer, urging him on in sanctification. As Mather says, "The Direction of Old has been, _To keep the_ Four Last Things _much in our Eye_," and then he quotes a couplet:

> By what good thoughts may men Temptation quell?
> On Death, & Judgment _Think_, _on_ Heav'n, & Hell.[3]

Puritanism adapted this technique from its old semipelagian context to a Reformed setting, using it as an incentive to spiritual sobriety. Mather found support for this emphasis in a number of Old Testament passages encouraging

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Trinterud holds that the 'terrors of the Law were employed not to scare men into Heaven but to humble them under divine sovereignty. (_The Forming of an American Tradition_ [Philadelphia, 1949], p. 96.

[1] Winslow, _op. cit._, p. 98.

[2] Miller, _The New England Mind: From Colony to Province_ (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), p. 212.

[3] C. Mather, _Nicetas_ (Boston, 1705), p. 42.

men to number their days and apply their hearts to wisdom. He returns to this theme with a frequency that suggests morbid preoccupation, but the modern reader must remember that Mather lived in an age which always faced the possibility of imminent death, which amounted under current medical conditions almost to a probability. Mather observed that 60% of the children born in New England died by the age of 17, and 90% by age 46.[1] While today it would be unnatural and forced to warn the average congregation of impending death, despite the danger of nuclear war, in Mather's day it was only existential realism. Mather notes, however, that although men theoretically allow for the fact that they will die, they still live as though they did not really believe this in their hearts, for "men seem to make their Own Death, as Difficult an Article of Belief, as the Resurrection of the Dead."[2] Since the fact of death is a powerful reminder of sin and a summons to redemption, Mather's effort is to get men to concentrate on this hard fact until it sinks in, even reading it in the constitution of nature: "We are from all Quarters invited unto the Meditation; Our very Diet is on Dead Creatures. Our very Cloathing is from Dead Creatures. From them there is that Loud Voice unto us all; Remember, you are your selves to Die."[3] Some of these passages in Mather are set in contexts of dust and gloom; others breathe a sense of the joy and glory of reality beyond the grave for the Christian. Most often, however, death is the terminal limit which warns us of the shortness of our days, the urgency of repentance, the brevity of time within which our work can count for Christ. A number of sermons pose the hypothetical question of what the hearer would do if he learned he had only a short time to live, and the application is usually a call to "go through the process" with all possible dispatch. The possibility of death is most strongly inculcated in little children, because of the probability of their early passing: "*Children*, go unto the *Burying-place*; there you will see many a *grave* shorter than yourselves."[1]

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[1] C. Mather, Seasonable Thoughts Upon Mortality (Boston, 1712), p. 15.

[2] C. Mather, The Fisherman's Calling (Boston, 1712), p. 38.

[3] C. Mather, Life Swiftly Passing and Quickly Ending (Boston, 1715), p. 16.

Death, in the seventeenth century, has as its principal terror the possibility of hell; and Mather does not hesitate to go into this subject quite graphically.

> Remember, The Wrath of God, like a Formidable *Fire*, will at *last*, with Exquisite Agonies, and Anguishes, Torture the Souls of them, that shall *Dy* in their unregeneracy. One that felt some flashes of that Fire in the Troubles of his Conscience, hearing of some speaking *about burning to death*, cryd out, O, that is but a metaphor to what I endure! And another that was broiling in a fire of such Troubles, Roared in this manner, *O might I have this mitigation of my Torments, to ly as a back log in the Fire on the Hearth, for a thousand Ages*! I urge this, when you are by the *Fireside* this *Winter*, think seriously with your selves, *could I bear to Roast in this Fire, Alas, this is but a painted Fire to that in which God shall take vengeance in those who Know Him not, and that Obey not His Gospel*? *And if I can't bear the metaphor, no, not for so much as a minute, how can yet I bear to remain, under the Wrath of God in Hell for infinitely more millions of Ages, than all the Fires on Earth have made ashes in the world*![2]

Mather appears to commit himself to belief in a literal physical hell, "a Dark Dungeon, where the horrid Rattle Snakes of Hell, are crawling and coiling about him . . . Be sure, the *Torments* of that *Hell*, cannot be less, than those of the *Fires*, & *Racks*, and *Wheels*, which the Persecutors have here inflicted on the Servants of GOD, and which must be Retaliated there."[3] And yet the frequently recurring phrase used in connection with fiery emblems of hell, that these "are but a Metaphor" for what the damned feel, is significant. Mather's full understanding of the meaning of hell is certainly more sophisticated, for "'Tis a *Pain of Loss*, that is the Hell of Hell itself."[1] At any rate, Mather never speaks to children or young people without some graphic allusion to hell's pains.

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[1] C. Mather, *Corderius Americanus* (Boston, 1708), p. 17.

[2] C. Mather, *Winter Meditations* (Boston, 1693), p. 81.

[3] C. Mather, *The Soul Upon the Wing* (Boston, 1722), pp. 16-17.

> Ah; Children, be afraid of your going *Prayerless* to Bed, lest the Devil by your Bed-fellow. Be afraid of *playing* on the *Lord's-Day*, lest the Devil by your *Play-fellow*. Be afraid of Telling *Lies*, or speaking wickedly, lest that *Evil Tongue* be one day tormented in the Flames, where, *A drop of water to cool the; Tongue*, will be roared for.[2]

Mather does not shrink from verbal pictures of demons grabbing infants, and freckled adders crawling over them in hell.[3] In *Perswasions from the Terror of the Lord*, a sermon at the funeral of a child crushed by a cart, Mather not only makes explicit use of the horrible accident as a warning, but also describes the final judgment in the words of the *Dies Irae*![4]

Mather retained these incentives because they were a means of spiritual compression through which the ecstasies necessary to assurance might be generated, and the congregation more sensibly awakened and arrested in its spiritual decline. This anthology of his worst excesses does little justice to him in its failure to indicate the predominant stress on God's grace and love in his preaching. It is remarkable, however, that he failed to recognize the implications of his own faith in the sovereignty of God, in the regeneration of infants. His practice was undoubtedly aimed at forcing regenerate covenant seed from a condition of potential holiness into a state of actual spiritual vigor. It apparently succeeded in doing this in many instances, and it is perhaps preferable to Pelagian sentimentalism about children; but once again, it was harsh medicine.

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[1] C. Mather, *Durable Riches* (Boston, 1695), p. 32.

[2] C. Mather, *Corderius Americanus* (Boston, 1708), p. 18.

[3] C. Mather, *Early Religion Urged* (Boston, 1694), pp. 63-4.

[4] C. Mather, *Perswasions from the Terror of the Lord* (Boston, 1711), p. 36.

8. Mather's Place in the Development of a Protestant Theory of Conversion

The Puritan stress on conversion is both the greatest strength and the gravest weakness of the movement. It is a strength because it brings into exaggerated and magnified focus a real and important strand in biblical teaching which does clearly insist on the need for supernatural rebirth of the fallen human personality. Because it insisted on a high development of the Christian life at the very outset, even before assurance of acceptance with God was possible, it led to a high standard of spirituality in the minority of Christians who could satisfy its prescriptions. Nevertheless, when it is examined against the whole backdrop of the history of Christian experience, the Puritan theory is seriously out of balance in several respects; and ironically enough Catholic mysticism, Lutheran Pietism, and Wesleyan Arminianism are in practice more 'Reformed' in their handling of conversion and assurance more than Puritan Calvinism.

Critics in the Reformed tradition -- and particularly the modern inheritors of the tradition of Calvinist scholastic orthodoxy -- have complained that the Puritan concept of conversion presupposed too great a chasm between nature and grace, in the 'before' and "after" of the convert's experience.[1] In Puritanism, a state of 'cold faith' accompanied by strenuous and sacrificial activity of the will in obedience to God and love to others could be mistaken for unregeneracy because it had no sensible emotional epiphenomena, or extraordinary outward graces. There is surely an important element of truth in this criticism. On the other hand, this very separation between nature and grace was in fact the main theological factor in the Great Awakening. It was a sharp-edged scalpel which divided between a dead and a living orthodoxy, and thus a powerful engine of awakening in the church. Kierkegaard, in his Attack on Christendom, notes that it is easy to fire at heretics and scoundrels with the artillery of the New Testament, but that it is "hard to punch a blow at real life, at the actual world in which we live, where for one certified hypocrite there are 100,000 twaddlers, for one heretic, 100,000 nincompoops."[1] What the Puritans had invented was a way to make the New Testament get at the twaddlers and the nincompoops, the men conformed outwardly to the conventions of Christendom, but were inwardly empty of divine grace.

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[1] Cf. R. Bronkema, The Essence of Puritanism (Goes, 1929), p. 180; De Jong, The Covenant Idea in New England Theology (Grand Rapids, 1945), pp. 107, 198, 218.

But there is another way of phrasing the nature/grace problem which indicts Mather's tradition in a way which is almost unanswerable. This is to recognize that the Puritans implicitly assumed that every Christian was to be a mystic. They felt that all believers are called to what Catholics would describe as a contemplative vocation, a life of strong devotion to meditation and prayer. In this they are on firm biblical ground, and have much to say to us today. But they often gave the impression that every Christian will attain the heights of what a Catholic spiritual director would call 'infused contemplation' -- a direct and sensible outpouring of divine comforts within the heart, independently initiated by God and unacquired by effort or merit. The Puritan position virtually demanded that every man attain infused contemplation before he could be called a Christian.

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[1] S. Kierkegaard, The Attack upon Christendom, Tr. by Walter Lowrie (Boston, 1956 [1944]), p. 108.

To the Catholic spiritual director, this would be to command the sovereign grace of God to work outside its chosen limits; for by far the more normal way of contemplatives lies in the foothills of 'acquired contemplation,' in which a normal use of the faculties, and faith which "hopes for what it does not see," combine for the purification of the soul.[1] In the Puritan process of preparation for conversion, a theology is at work which is far less 'Calvinistic' than this, which shows less reverent respect for the autonomy of God.[2] The logic of the impossible demand for infused contemplation as a ground for assurance pushed the Puritans toward the assumption that acquired contemplation might eventually *require* God to give a direct infusion of assurance, and the very un-Reformed notion of congruent merit began to reappear, as it always must when assurance is grounded on scrutinized experience rather than an outward-directed and dependent faith in the Savior. The spiritual result of this doctrinal imbalance was, as Alan

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[1] Cf. P. Pourrat, *Christian Spirituality*, Tr. by W. H. Mitchell and S. P. Jacques, III (Westminster, Md., 1953), 209; IV (Westminster, Md., 1955), 51 Adolphe Tanqueray, *The Spiritual Life*, tr. by Herman Branderis (2nd and rev. ed., Tournai, 1930), 605-6: "Acquired contemplation is nothing more than a simplified affective prayer, and may be defined as contemplation in which the simplification of our intellectual and affective acts is the result of our own activity aided by grace . . . Infused or passive contemplation is necessarily a free gift; we cannot obtain it by our efforts even with the help of ordinary grace. It is a kind of contemplation in which the acts of the mind and of the will have become simplified under the influence of a special grace which takes hold of us and causes us to receive lights and affections which God produces in us with our consent."

[2] In this connection it is interesting to compare the conversion theory of Puritanism with the approach of the Jansenists, whom Mather much admired. Here also there was a rationalistic overdevelopment of double predestination (the Jansenists were in express accord with the *Canons* of the Synod of Dort); here again there was an insistence on assurance of salvation to avoid the *tentatio praedestinationis*, and again it must be obtained through a process of repentance (or rather, of penance) rather than *sola fide*; and again the assurance approaches the level of infused contemplation. Another parallel morphology is present in the later development of Quietism, with its doctrine of resigned waiting on God for assurance. *Vide* Pourrat, *op. cit.*, IV, 15-23.

Simpson says, that "the whole history of Puritanism is a commentary on its failure to satisfy the cravings which its preaching had aroused. It was forever producing rebellions."[1]

The Puritans in their evengelism were using nets which would catch big fish -- mystics and lay spiritual leaders -- but which would lose the great majority of lesser disciples of which the church of Christ is composed. Long before Mather's time, English Protestants were showing concern over this deficiency. H. C. Porter notes that already in the 1690's there were people at Cambridge in states of depression induced by Puritan hypercalvinism, unable to believe that Christ had died for them, and that some of these were turning to Arminianism to solve their problem. He adds that the necessity of dealing with problems of assurance was making Calvinists turn Arminian in the pulpit, as Mather often seems to do.[2] Such a committed Puritan theologian as Thomas Goodwin almost became an Arminian because of spiritual depression induced by the fear that he was not elect.[3] Near Mather's time, Richard Baxter was critical of the dangers of unhealthy introspection and over-narrow qualifications of church membership in Puritanism, and felt that the Antinomians might be making a needed stress on free grace in Christ against an overbalance in Puritan experimentalism.[4] Continuing in the stream of Baxter's irenic moderation, Philip Doddridge, in the early eighteenth century, had proceeded quietly to drop the 'highest points of Calvinism,' such as reprobation and irresistable grace, as unworkable elements to place in the foreground of Christian experience, and had moved into a rather fluid Arminian evangelicalism.[1] According to C. J. Stranks, the phenomenal popularity of the Pelagian Whole Duty of Man during the eighteenth century was due not only to its accessible common-sense legalism, and the popular drift toward "Socinian moonlight," but because contrary to predestinarian extremism it said that any man could influence his eternal destiny by his response to divine grace.[2] English Protestantism was searching for a way out of the mind-blocking impasses of hypercalvinism, and the great stream of English experimentalism was consequently shifting from a Calvinist to an Arminian basis.

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[1] Alan Simpson, Puritanism in Old and New England (Chicago, 1955), p. 24.

[2] H. C. Porter, Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge (Cambridge, England, 1958), pp. 281, 285-6, 310.

[3] Alan Simpson, op. cit., p. 3.

[4] Cf. Hugh Martin, Puritanism and Richard Baxter (London, 1954), p. 186; G. F. Nuttall, Visible Saints (Oxford, 1957), pp. 158-9.

In the simultaneously developing Lutheran Pietism in Germany, criticisms similar to these had been voiced from the outset, as was almost inevitable in the environment of anticalvinist Lutheran orthodoxy. Spener was against the formulation of a standardized Busskampf, distrusted the use of legal terrors to produce repentance and felt that the gospel of grace must be brought into the foreground, and put more stress on an obedient life as a ground of assurance rather than inner states of feeling.[3] Both Spener and Francke revived Luther's doctrine of assurance, not as feeling (which they felt was unreliable), but as a clear conviction of acceptance by God produced in the heart by the Spirit, sometimes with joy but often without emotional concommitants.[4] While most previous scholars have attributed to

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[1] G. F. Nuttall, Philip Doddridge (London, 1951), p. 3.

[2] C. J. Stranks, Anglican Devotion (London, 1961), p. 147.

[3] Cf. D. W. Brown, "The Problem of Subjectivism in Pietism" (unpublished doctoral thesis, Northwestern University, 1962), pp. 237-8, 261-4; A. W. Nagler, Pietism and Methodism (Nashville, 1918), p. 33.

[4] A. W. Nagler, op. cit., p. 129.

Francke a shift toward subjectivism induced by Puritan influence, with a standardized and datable conversion held as normative, recent scholarship has shown that these characteristics are not present in Francke but projected on Halle by its theological opposition. Francke refused to stereotype all conversions according to the pattern of his own, as some have insisted, and never insisted that a datable conversion was necessary: his thrust was simply that there was a difference among "religious people" between those who were converted and unconverted, and that the clergy should preach often on the marks of conversion.[1] Like Mather, Francke did apparently derive from Puritanism a minimal *Busskampf*, consisting of conviction through the Word of God followed by contention against the flesh and Satan leading to a breakthrough into faith based on God's grace. This was not, however, in shape or complexity the equivalent of the Puritan *Busskampf*, though it also is conceived of as a hard and sometimes lengthy struggle.[2] Francke held that predestination in Reformed teaching was a dangerous error, leading to many *Anfechtungen*, and strongly emphasized the universality of the Atonement and the free offer of the gospel. He was generally synergistic in his approach to conversion, although stressing

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[1] Max Fischer, "Die Bleibende Bedeutung des Pietismus," in Oskar Söhngen, ed., *Die Bleibende Bedeutung des Pietismus* (Wittenburg, 1960), p. 103. Erich Beyreuther, in *August Hermann Francke*, 1663-1727, *Zeuge des lebendigen Gottes* (*2te Aufl.*, Marburg, 1961), p. 51, relates Francke's reply from his deathbed to a student who asked if he should know the date of his conversion: "*Wir haben nicht zu fragen, Bist du bekehrt? Wann würdest du bekehrt? Sondern: Was bedeutet dir Christus? Was hast du persönlich mit Gott erlebt? Ist dir in deinem täglichen Leben Christus notwendig?*"

[2] Klaus Deppermann, *Der Hallesche Pietismus* (Gottingen, 1961), p. 91. Erhard Peschke, in *Studien zur Theologie August Hermann Franckes*, I (Berlin, 1964), 31, quotes Francke on the struggle of repentance: "*Deshalb darf man an der schweren Arbeit und Mühe der Busse nicht vorbeigehen. Unbekehrte Menschen, die an den Kindern Gottes Freudigkeit und Zufriedenheit wahrnehmen, wissen gar nicht, wieviel Mühe und Arbeit diese durchstehen müssten.*"

God's sovereign grace operating preveniently,[1] so that at times he sounds almost like Mather, calling for the sinner to turn but insisting that only through God's help is this possible. He was at some pains to distinguish between an "Evangelical Frame" and a "Legal Frame and Spirit of Bondage," where men are "press'd to Duty and Working, but not encouraged by the Grace of Christ, nor directed where to look for Strength to perform it."[2] On baptismal regeneration, he was scrupulously orthodox in the Lutheran sense, but was easily able to accomodate this with his semi-Puritan approach to conversion by defining the latter as a reconversion after a falling away from baptismal grace which he felt was nearly universal among Christians. Quite obviously he differed from Puritans and other Calvinists in his rejection of the doctrine of final perseverence, and his consequent belief in the possibility of a fall out of the state of grace.[3] There is an evident striving here to retain the dynamic of the Puritan approach to conversion while modifying it by retiring from the scene the doctrines of high Calvinism.

The result, in Halle Pietism, was not unlike the Arminianism of the Wesleyan phase of the Great Awakening. The Awakening in America was still Puritan to the heart, both in the Middle Colonies and in Edwards' chronicles of the work in Northampton; but throughout the long repercussions of the Awakening during the eighteenth century in America, there seems to have been a growing underground reaction against the Puritan use of Calvinism in its doctrine of conversion. Ultimately Lyman Beecher wrote in his Autobiography:

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[1] Erhard Peschke, op. cit., 52, 54, 66-8.

[2] A. H. Francke, A Letter Concerning the Most Useful Way of Preaching, tr. by David Jennings (4th ed., London, 1725), p. 73.

[3] Ibid., 137.

> For cases like mine, Brainerd's Life is a most undesirable thing. It gave me a tinge for years. So Edwards on the Affections -- a most overwhelming thing, and to common minds the most entangling. The impressions left by such books were not spiritual, but a state of permanent hypochondria -- the horrors of a mind without guidance, motive, or ability to do any thing. They are a bad generation of books, on the whole. Divine sovereignty does the whole in spite of them. I was converted in spite of such books. I wish I could give you my clinical theology. I have used my evangelical philosophy all my lifetime, and relieved people without number out of the sloughs of high Calvinism.[1]

Here is one major root of the rising dominance of Arminianism in the Revivalism of the nineteenth century. While this doctrinal shift was undoubtedly partly due to the growing rationalism of the later Edwardean theologians, much of it was motivated by genuine pastoral concern. Puritans, from the standpoint of Reformation Calvinism, were doing the wrong things for the right reasons in their evangelism, and wounding and alienating many souls in the process. Arminians such as Finney, for all the crudeness of their intellectual systems, were doing the right things for the wrong reasons -- freely evangelizing in harmony with the New Testament, though they had paid for this freedom by losing, through their rationalizations, a Pauline and Augustinian profundity, grounded in the paradox of divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

In all the problems outlined above, Mather was confusedly involved, struggling half-unconsciously with the defects of his tradition. He was dimly aware that he was trapped in a theology of conversion which was inherently self-contradictory with respect to faith, and which, following the biblical precept that a man should examine himself to determine whether he is in the faith, had somehow overshot the mark and wandered into a dangerous climate where spiritual sickness was inevitable, where the majority of those in the congregation were numbed and fearful bystanders while a few of a more volatile temperament were able to achieve a fitful stability of assurance. In the gradual evolution of his pastoral approach there is certainly a mitigation of the harsh logic of some of the original Puritan theories of conversion, and a movement toward biblical and Reformation sanity. It is true that his thinking does not really break free from his tradition: what he offers, rather, is a sort of buffered Puritanism -- the Puritan theory of conversion with an assortment of neutralizing medicines to safeguard against pathological side-effects. But while he was fearful of moving beyond Puritan hypercalvinism into a biblical evangelism which would seem Arminian, there is a sense in which his lifelong wrestling with the problems of this tradition made him closer to the nineteenth-century revivalists than was Edwards, whose great treatise on the affections does not move far beyond Thomas Shepard in appreciating the dangers of introspection.

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[1] L. Beecher, The Autobiography of Lyman Beecher, ed. by Barbara M. Cross, I (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), 29-30.

CHAPTER IV

MATHER'S METHODISM: THE MACHINERY OF PIETY

1. Mather as a Collector of Spiritual Methodology

From the subject of the inception of the spiritual life, it is appropriate to move on to the methodology of its nurture; but especially so in the case of Mather, for one of the salient features of his piety is its fascination with the machinery through which grace enters the soul. There is in Mather a baroque embellishment of the means of grace which is a little suspicious; it is as though he felt more dedication to the promotion of these channels of grace than to the giver. His teaching and his personal habits constitute a jackdaw's nest of methodology for the cultivation of growth in Christian experience.

This is an espect of Mather's piety which fairly leaps out at the casual reader of his works, especially the Diary, and it is probably one of the main reasons for his reputation for superficiality. At times Mather almost seems to define godliness as the operation of a set of devotional gadgets. This was especially true in his youth. When he was twenty, he wrote of "the welcome Entertainment which I would give, all the Day long, unto Methods that may occur for my Serving of God . . . and reserve many written Memorials, of my Conclusions and Contrivances."[1] Just how comprehensively the methodology of nurture is to be applied to life is shown in an ensuing passage:

> And especially, the little Parcels, Fragments, and Intervals of Time, wherein the Generalitie of People, do suffer their minds to ly like

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[1] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 60 (May, 1683).

> the *Field* of the Sluggard, *overgrown with Weeds*, I would have to bee so well-husbanded by mee, as that at all Places of Diversion, I would be at my spiritual *Alchymie*. The candid *Lessons*, thus received, shall not bee *dismissed* without a gainful *Ejaculation*, unto the *God of all Grace*.[1]

This "spiritual Alchymie" of "Conclusions and Contrivances" was so important to him that during this period of his life he would penalize himself by a fine if he neglected any part of the daily machinery of religious duties.[2] He was so involved in ascetic disciplines at times that he "*over-did*, in these Mortifications. I broke the *sixth* Commandment, I wasted by Strength, I wounded my Health, very sinfully, in the Excesses of my Devotions. I doubt, I have shortned my Dayes, by this *Over-doing*; I feel that I have thereby brought upon myself *splenetic* Maladies."[3] This sort of spiritual sophomorism might be considered normal for a young Christian zealous to develop his spirituality. But Mather never ceased to tinker with the 'instrumentation of piety,' to use Herbert Perluck's apt phrase.[4] In middle life, fending off a proposal of marriage by a young lady, he "mention'd my way of living, in continual Prayers, Tears, Fasts, and macerating Devotions and Reservations, to divert her from her Proposal."[5] In his son's biography, the longest single chapter is devoted wholly to Mather's 'methods of piety.' Otho Beall and Richard Shryock comment that Mather thought of himself mainly as a digester and compiler of other men's discoveries rather than as an innovator.[1] This is true in all areas of learning and action; Mather excels as observer and implementer rather than as creator, although these talents are so developed in him that he actually anticipates the future by extrapolating trends which were contemporary with him. But nowhere are his talents as collector more fully exercised than in the field of spiritual methodology.

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[1] *Ibid*., 61-2.

[2] *Ibid*., 71, 100.

[3] *Ibid*., 81.

[4] H. A. Perluck, "Puritan Expression and the Decline of Piety (unpublished doctoral thesis, Brown University, 1955), p. 6.

[5] C. Mather, *Diary*, I (New York, 1957), 458 (January, 1702/3).

He is, first of all, a terminal figure in a century of this kind of collecting within the Puritan tradition itself. Just as Bach summed up the style and techniques of the Baroque era, while thoroughly out of fashion in the period in which he lived, so Mather is the apotheosis of Puritan methodology -- not, unfortunately, of spirituality; for this we must look to Edwards. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the devotional manuals of the English Puritans were filled with this methodism, which was an invaluable aid to their innerworldly nonasticism. This emphasis crossed the Atlantic and became normative in New England. One of Mather's immediate predecessors in New England, John Higginson, in a preface to Mather's *Winter Meditations* (1693), urges the reader to

> . . . *Exercise thy self unto godliness*, Now that is done by a frequent practice of those Duties which have a Tendency to the promoting of the power of *godliness*, in ourselves and others . . . *Meditation*, Self-Examination, and Secret Prayer . . . There is no maintaining the Life and Power of *Godliness* without a diligent practice and a frequent Exercise of the forenamed Holy Duties.[2]

Godliness is not precisely *defined* as a set of methods here, but these are considered essential to its nurture.

The Puritan tradition itself was not innovating in most of its devotional practice; it was merely concentrating and reformulating on a Reformed basis practices which were already common in the Catholic tradition. Pourrat points out that regulated 'spiritual exercises' date from the beginning of the mendicant and preaching orders, which broke out of the monasteries to bring the 'higher life' of developed piety to the masses. The Renaissance, in turn, challenged the vitality of the whole church, and drove it into methodology as into a set of protective walls.[1] Counter-Reformation Catholicism, under the dual pressure of a secularizing society and the example of Protestant efforts to make monastic piety breathe the outside air, through men like de Sales elaborated its own disciplines of 'religious life within the world;'[2] and there was considerable cross-pollination between Reformed and Counter-Reformed methodologies. But most of these post-Medieval forms of spiritual method are evolutionary adaptations of traditions already alive in the earlier periods of the church. As a scholar, Mather was interested in pushing behind the Puritan models of devotion, and Medieval or Counter-Reformation forms, to the original devotional practices of the Patristic period; and later in his life he considered assembling "an Extract of such things as peculiarly belong to the Christian Asceticks,"[3] as he called the fathers. It is interesting to find Mather harking back to these sources for authority in his methodology, just as Reformed theologians habitually resorted to Patristic sources to buttress their doctrinal interpretations. We must now examine this methodism in detail to see if it gives evidence of a deeper rootage in the spirituality of the New Testament itself.

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[1] O. Beall and R. Shryock, Cotton Mather, *First Significant Figure in American Medicine* (Baltimore, 1954), p. 64.

[2] C. Mather, *Winter Meditations* (Boston, 1693), p. i.

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[1] P. Pourrat, Christian Spirituality, tr. by W. H. Mitchell and S. P. Jacques, II (Westminster, Md., 1953), 2; III (Westminster, Md., 1953), 4.

[2] Ibid., III (Westminster, Md., 1953), 235 ff.

[3] C. Mather, Diary, II (New York, 1957), 87-8 (July, 1711). The proposed collection never seems to have been finished.

2. Meditation

"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."[1] Nearly all experiential traditions recognize faith as the heart of the spiritual life, and exposure to that which is believed as the natural method of reinforcing and enlarging faith, though most have gone beyond the apostle's statement to include meditation on natural revelation as well as the kerygma. In the Medieval tradition, particularly, meditation, and not programmed austerities, became the primary tool of ordinary spiritual growth.[2] Bernard of Clairvaux states that meditation and prayer are the two feet by which men ascend God.[3] Hugh of St. Victor made reading and prayer the first two stages of mystical ascent, and subsequent mystical disciplines followed his approach.[4] At the end of the Middle Ages and in the early Renaissance, those who were concerned for spiritual awakening in the church stressed meditation as the key to this.[5] The Puritans in their own form of spirituality placed meditation very close to the core of what is vital in Christian nurture;[6] and in fact the content of all their metholology can really be reduced to the two basic techniques of meditation (on heard, read, or observed revelation) and prayer: a two-way communication of the soul with God. Thus Mather, following the first Psalm makes frequent meditation essential to experiential holiness:

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[1] Romans 10:17 (RSV).

[2] P. Pourrat, *op. cit.*, III (Westminster, Md., 1953), 5.

[3] *Ibid.*, II (Westminster, Md., 1953), 24.

[4] *Ibid.*, 117-20.

[5] *Ibid.*, III (Westminster, Md., 1953), 13.

[6] Gordon S. Wakefield, *Puritan Devotion* (London, 1957), p. 85 ff.

> Let us by a Contemplative Eating, chew upon the Word of God. Never do any Men Walk with God, like them that can say, Meditation is sweet unto me . . . We should after a Sermon, retire to Ruminate thereupon . . . We should often single out some Text so some Truth to Exercise our Thoughts upon: This will strengthen us for our Walk.[1]

It is basically by meditation on one's own condition and the meaning of the Cross that regeneration itself is humanly accomplished, as Mather indicates in Zalmonah (1725).[2]

A. Meditation on Scripture

Among the post-Medieval Catholic and Protestant traditions, the content of meditation became a point of intense controversy. There was, first of all, the question of whether meditation should have any intellectual object at all, or simply reach out for the being of God in mental and sensory darkness. While St. Teresa and John of the Cross both insist on a superintellectual contemplation of the divine nature, the ordinary teaching of the church emphasized meditation on the life of Christ and the basic core of Catholic doctrine as the safer path. Thus, doctrinal and Christological meditation make up the core of that great instrument of Counter-reformation piety, the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola.[3] The Devotio Moderna and other schools among the northern Christian humanists gravitated toward scripture as the content of meditation, rather than the doctrinal formulations of the scholastics. Gerard Groot, for example, recommends as of first importance meditation on the gospels, second on the Old Testament, and last on the saints and doctors of the church.[4] Reformation piety even more stringently insisted on a form of meditation which concentrated on the text of scripture. Both the Puritans and their opponents in the Counter-Reformation were basically relying on the same devotional machinery for the energy and direction of their faith and action: but the engine of meditation was powered by different fuels. The Ignatian piety is sensual in its approach to the gospels, endeavoring to reproduce in 'compositions' of biblical events in the imagination the experience of kissing the footprints in the Nativity, seeing the biblical scene in the mind's eye and even smelling its accompanying odors, and thus awakening motivation for the Christian life. Puritans rejected this approach as a fleshly effort to counterfeit the infusions of the Spirit by manipulating natural human emotions. Their own meditation aimed at a deeper stimulation affecting the mind and heart at the roots of the personality, through the application of biblical truth by the Spirit.

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[1] C. Mather, Several Sermons Concerning Walking with God (Boston, 1689), p. 21.

[2] C. Mather, Zalmonah (Boston, 1725), pp. 86-7.

[3] P. Pourrat, op. cit., III (Westminster, Md., 1953), 33-9.

[4] Ibid., 13.

Despite his extensive extrabiblical scholarship, Mather gave considerable time daily to meditation on the scriptures in the original tongue. Before his twentieth year he had formed the regular habit of reading fifteen chapters of the Bible every morning and meditating on these.[1] For the average Christian, he recommends establishing communion with God immediately upon rising by fixing the mind on Him in meditation, and entering as soon as possible into a time of scripture-reading and 'closet-prayer,' followed by public reading and prayer with the rest of the family and the servants.[2] No precise direction on the amount of scripture to be read is included. Other occasions of reading and meditation might recur during the day; even in a tract for sailors, Mather recommends the reading of scripture twice a day, combined with many occasions of prayer.[1]

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[1] Samuel Mather, Life of Cotton Mather (Boston, 1729), p. 7.

[2] C. Mather, Man Eating the Food of Angels (Boston, 1710), p. 12.

The process of meditation on the truth obtained through these times of reading was, like all of Mather's methodology, arduous. Early in his own life he began

> . . . *Reading the Scriptures*, with such a devout Attention, as to fetch at least one *Observation*, and one *Supplication*, a *Note* and a *Wish*, out of every *Verse* in all the Bible . . . I have a Prospect of, who can tell how much, *Truth*, and *Grace*, to pass thro' my Soul in thus waiting upon God! And I give more Thanks unto the Lord, for teaching mee, this *way of living*, than if Hee had bestowed the greatest earthly Revenues upon mee. The Method, which I thus used in *Reading*, I also took up for Singing.[2]

Later in his life he adopted an even more ambitious technique of making the scripture real in his experience, which he called the "porismatic method":[3]

> A Thought visits my Mind, which I hope, will grow upon me, and have blessed Consequences. The holy Spirit of GOD who inspired His Chosen Servants to write the Oracles He has given us in the Scriptures, made heavenly Impressions on the Minds of the Writers, which raised Heavenly Affections in them. When I take a Passage of the Bible under my Consideration, I will nicely observe, what Affection of Piety appears in the Passage, and press after the raising of the same Affection in myself, and not count that I have the full Meaning of the Text until I have done so.[4]

While his earlier practice had been a sort of utilitarian processing of verses to mine their doctrinal and practical implications, this new technique sought the recreation in his own soul of the emotional or affective state of the author. It was as though the heart of the reader were like the phonograph needle, which must vibrate in the same tones present in the engraving stylus in order to reproduce the original music. Both in his earlier and later methodology Mather implies that he obtained his teaching from no man but directly from the Spirit, but his whole approach in the porismatic method is redolent of European Pietism, and the second *Diary* passage is almost a copy of a passage in Francke, which speaks of the difference between a living and a dead orthodoxy in their approach to the scripture.[1] In a work published in the same year as the second *Diary* entry, Mather describes the porismatic method and observes, "Easily do I concur with my excellent Franckius, in allowing, that an unregenerate mind, is poorly qualified for such an exercise as this."[2] In another work some four years later, Mather advises that there is not

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[1] C. Mather, *The Sailours Companion* (Boston, 1709), p. ii.

[2] C. Mather, *Diary*, I (New York, 1957), 103.

[3] Presumably from πορίζω, to procure or provide food for oneself.

[4] C. Mather, *Diary*, II (New York, 1957), 479 (October, 1717).

> . . . a Nobler Method, among all our *Hermaneutic Instruments*, to come at *the true Sense* of our *Spiritual songs*, than, affectum scriptorum sacrorum observare, uniumque assumere, as Dr. *Spener* advises; or an *Experimental Taste*, of the PIETY which was working in the Hearts of the Writers at the Time of their Inspiration. Even an *Illiterate Christian*, that Lives unto GOD, and is no stranger to the *Sentiments of Piety*, may in that way reach the *True sense* of the *Lively Oracles*, and (a *Luther*, *a Gerhardt*, a *Franckius*, and all the sons of the

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[1] Francke notes that "when we read the Scripture we are bound to see that our *natural* Affections be amended and corrected; and that our hearts under the influence of the Holy Spirit, overflow with *gracious* affections." "The minds of the sacred Penmen were not unmoved; but, on the contrary, active, enlightened, and replete with holy Affections." "Very few are solicitous to ascertain the spiritual meaning of the Sacred Writings; but are anxious rather to be diffuse on critical, controverted, and difficult points, where there is a wider field for the range of natural intellect. This inattention to the Affections is a main reason, why some commentaries are so meagre and unsatisfactory to spiritual readers, who with a view to personal edification, search after the mind of the Spirit, and the revelations of the divine image. A comment, written without adverting to the Affections, is so only in name and form." "The more we 'put on' their Affections, the more deeply shall we enter into their Writings, and meditate on the truths which they reveal. Whenever the Affections of the Sacred Penmen develop and unfold themselves, let us seek to possess the same amiable emotions." *Vide* A. H. Francke, *A Guide to the Reading and Study of the Holy Scriptures*, tr. by William Jacques (Philadelphia, 1823), pp. 123, 129, 131, 147. Francke gives here a schema of tests to determine if affections are truly gracious and issue from the Spirit and not from the old nature, quite reminiscent of Edwards' later work.

[2] C. Mather, *Psalterium Americanum* (Boston, 1718), p. xxiv.

> orthodox and genuine *Pietism*, tell us), he will have within *him*, an Exposition far more Valuable than any of the *Commentators*, (truly *Commentators*!) who are *Alienated from the Life of GOD*, can help him to.[1]

We might definitely conclude that Mather adopted the porismatic method, and a new and more deeply affectional outlook, from the Continental Pietists, except that Mather remarks on the same emphasis in Matthew Henry.[2] The affectional piety of Spener and Francke was latent in the New England tradition, as Edwards later demonstrated by his masterpiece in the field, and Mather occupies identical ground, since he holds that "all True PIETY is begun by the Enkindling of these *Affections* in the Soul. It proceeds, it prospers, it improves, as these *Affections* gain strength and vigour there."[3]

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[1] C. Mather, *The Accomplished Singer* (Boston, 1721), p. 12.

[2] C. Mather, *Psalterium Americanum* (Boston, 1718), p. xxiv. In the *Magnalia Christi Americana*, II (Hartford, 1855), 150, Mather notes that Thomas Shepard "had the divine rhetorick, recommended by Dr. Stoughton in that speech of his, "this I know and dare avouch, that the highest mystery in divine rhetorick is, to feel what a man speaks, and then to speak what he felt."

[3] *Ibid*., p. xxiii. There is a problem latent here which will later emerge both in European Pietism and in American Revivalism: the association of piety and even of conversion with *emotions* and 'emotionalism.' While Mather, Francke and Edwards speak of 'gracious affections,' they did not refer exclusively to the emotional life in its simple glandular sense. 'Emotion' in our usage of the word is an epiphenomenon of the experience these men were talking about: a sense of the reality of spiritual things, the quality of experience which the New Testament calls ζωή. The Reformers, and even Puritan orthodoxy, spoke of the need for *illumination* of the scriptures, to impress the reality of their truths and the nature of that world of referents to which they point, upon the otherwise blind inner vision of the convert. The preoccupation of both Puritans and Pietists with gracious affections is simply a search for an adequate description of illumination as it occurs in normative Christian experience, extending it' to deeper levels of existence than its normal connotation of mental vision can convey. Unfortunately, they did not hit upon a precisely accurate terminology for the experience they were describing. While ζωή refers to an enlivening by the Holy Spirit of mind, will, and emotion, taking place at the root of the personality, the biblical *heart*, rather than in any one of the divided faculties of the soul, these men in their terminology connected the quality they were striving to define much too closely with the

In his treatment of the *object* of meditation, Mather oscillates between Medieval and Reformation styles. While he occasionally proposes meditation on such 'absolute' doctrinal truths such as the Trinity or the Four Last Things, he generally recommends the use of passages of scripture. His own treatment of these, however, is often extravagantly allegorical, abounding in eschatological and Christological interpretations of difficult passages. Like Thomas à Kempis and the *Devotio Moderna*, he emphasizes meditation on Christ in order to the *imitatio Christio*, but he also recommends above all other objects of consideration the person and work of Christ on our behalf.

> I have read, that *five* devout persons being together, there was this question started among them: how, in what ways, by what means, "they strengthened themselves in abstaining from sin against the God of heaven?" The first answered, "I frequently meditate on the certainty of death, and the uncertainty of the time for my death, and this makes me live in the fear of sin every day as my last." The second answered, "I frequently meditate on the strict account of sin that I am to give at the day of Judgment, and the everlasting torments in hell, to be inflicted on them that can give no good account." The third answered, "I frequently meditate on the vileness and filthiness and loathsomeness of sin, and the excellency of grace, which is contrary unto so vile a thing." The Fourth answered, "I frequently meditate on the eternal rewards and pleasures reserved in heaven for them that avoid the pleasures of sin, which are but for a moment." The fifth answered, "I frequently meditate on the Lord JESUS CHRIST, and his wondrous love to miserable sinners, in dying a cursed and bitter death for our sin; and this helps me to abstain from sin, more than any other consideration whatsoever;" and the answer of this last was indeed the greatest of all.[1]

It is hard to say which is more remarkable here, the persistence of patterns

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emotional life taken by itself. Consequently it was easy for subsequent generations to empty the concept of 'the affections' of its full, life-embracing content of spiritual revitalization, and lead men either into a swamp of sentimentality (as in the later German Pietism) or into the arid desert of Finneyan revivalism, where emotion was simply a lever to be pulled to move the mind and will to commitment. A more carefully biblical terminology among Puritan/Pietists might have guarded against some of this slippage into shallow emotionalism by their descendents, who did not see that the 'root of the matter' for them was much deeper than feeling-states

[1] C. Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, II (Hartford, 1855), 110.

which are fundamentally incompatible with Reformation, or Mather's ability to transcend these and cleave hard to an evangelical and Christocentric stance, despite his partial use of Medieval fuels for the engine of meditation.

B. Meditation on Nature and Daily Life

In the Puritan development of the innerweltliche Askese, the believer's daily contact with invisible realities through the medium of biblical revelation was designed to neutralize the effect of a day's journey among the distracting spiritual disorder of the layman's daily business. But meditation was also expected to reach out and embrace the common occurrences of life, and extract nurture also from natural revelation. Apart from its importance as therapeutic nurture, this meditation on natural theology was assumed to be one of the normal expressions of the healthy Christian life, an inevitable concommitant of "heavenly-mindedness," for "a Man that is full of God, beholds God in every thing. Face of God in every Work of God. This man sticks not in any Creatures, stays not in Second Causes; with a spiritualized Soul, he soars up to God in all."[1] While Mather made no more than ordinary orthodox use of natural theology in his theoretical substructure, he recurs to it habitually as a devotional aid. On rare occasions he follows this into something deceptively close to deistic piety, as he seems to penetrate behind natural causes to the glory and immensity of the original creative Mind. But even in his physico-theological works there is a determined movement away from bare natural theology toward a devotional understanding of the universe which can only emerge as the fruit of special revelation. Again his piety is basically Christocentric:

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[1] C. Mather, Batteries upon the Kingdom of the Devil (London, 1695), p. 177.

> I will assert, that a glorious CHRIST is more to be considered in the *Works of Nature* than the *Philosopher* is generally aware of; and my CHRISTIAN *Philosopher* has not fully done his Part, till He who is the *Firstborn of every Creature* be come into Consideration with him.[1]
>
> One says upon it, 'If this be so, we need not break the Glasses of *Galileo*, the *Spots* may be washed out of the *Sun*, and *total Nature* sanctified to God that made it!'
>
> . . . .
>
> O CHRISTIAN, *lift up now thine Eyes*, *and look from the place where thou art* to all Points of the Compass, and concerning *whatever thou seest*, allow that all these things are formed *for the Sake* of that Glorious-One, who is now *God manifest in the Flesh* of our Jesus . . . He is that WORD of GOD *by whom all things were made, and without whom was not anything made that was made* . . . We see an incomparable *Wisdom* of GOD in His *Creatures*; one cannot but presently infer, *What an incomprehensible* Wisdom *then in the Methods and Affairs of that Redemption, whereof the glorious GOD has laid the Plan in our* JESUS! Things which the *Angels desire to look into* . . . *The infinite Wisdom which formed all these things is peculiarly seated in the Son of God*; He is that *reflexive Wisdom* of the eternal *Father*, and that *Image of the invisible God, by whom all things* were created: in *Him* there is after a peculiar manner the original *Idea* and *Archetype* of every thing that offers the infinite *Wisdom* of God to our Admiration . . . Then 'tis impossible to stop without adding, *How glorious, how wondrous, how lovely art thou, O our Saviour!*[2]

This is not the literal Aristotelianism of the deistic natural theologians, but a neoplatonic vision of Christ as the *logos*-pattern, in whom are hidden all the archetypes of beauty and excellence which are separated and refracted in the material Creation, the personal and original blueprint of all goodness in the divine Mind. Mather's meditation on nature is not a mere reading of the natural evidences to catch glimpses of the 'power and godhead' of God, but rather a symbolic or allegorical reading of typology in nature. Just as he is constantly pushing beyond the propositional substance of scripture to find typological references to Christ, so also he reads the universe allegorically, fixing on symbolic references to biblical realities which he finds woven into the structure of reality.

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[1] C. Mather, *The Christian Philosopher* (Loneon, 1721), p. 298.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 300-1.

The proximate historical origin of this approach lie in the Victorine piety of the twelfth century. Richard and Hugh of St. Victor, influenced perhaps by the allegorical exegesis of scripture in the Alexandrian school, had used the natural world not only as a ladder to climb toward the vision of God through contemplation of His wisdom and grandeur displayed in the creatures, but also had viewed it as a richly detailed mirror-image of invisible things of God. The universe was for them a vast cathedral, in which both the whole architecture and the smallest details of decoration were designed with hidden theological referents.[1] The Victorine concept of a sacramental universe was picked up in the Counter-Reformation as an aid to inner-worldly mysticism, e. g. in Ludovicus Vives; and from Vives, according to C. J. Stranks, it slipped over into the English Protestant tradition, where it became closely identified with Puritanism.[2] By Mather's time, the enterprise of cracking the code of nature through meditation on its parabolic detail, which he calls "occasional reflections," had become a standard tool in Puritan methodology.[3]

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[1] P. Pourrat, *Christian Spirituality*, trans. by W. H. Mitchell and S. P. Jacques, II (Westminster, Md., 1953), 107-28.

[2] C. J. Stranks, *Anglican Devotion* (London, 1961), pp. 23, 45. Of course, the concept is not so obscure or original that it needs such a channel of influence to spring up anew in the context of ordinary Christian intercourse between the Bible and the world. The last book of Arndt's *True Christianity* (1606) is entirely composed of typological meditation of this sort. Even Goethe alludes to in the last act of *Faust*: "*Alles vergängliches/ Ist nur ein Gleichnis* . . . "

[3] Gordon S. Wakefield, *Puritan Devotion* (London, 1957), p. 85. At the beginning of *Agricola* is a testimonial signed by the pastors in Boston, including Wadsworth, Colman, Thatcher, Prince, Cooper, Foxcroft, Gee, and others, which indicates a great deal about the entrenchment of this practice and the current appreciation for Mather's handling of it: "*To Spiritualize the common Actions of life, and make a religious Improvement of worldly*

The method of occasional reflection is woven through almost everything Cotton Mather touched. His first published sermon, a series of such reflections, states that "*it would be an incredible benefit to the Church of God, for men to have their houses furnished with* Treatises *which shall teach them how to* Spiritualize *the outward occurrents of their Occupations*, and *set* Pulpits, *and faithful* Preachers *for them in every* Business *that they have to meddle with*.[1] Almost every subsequent publication has at least one example of occasional reflection, and often a reference to the practice; and several larger works are wholly composed of such reflections. Part of the reason for his obsession with this form is its usefulness as a medium for easy communication to his listeners; the agricultural metaphors of *Agricola* were addressed to his home congregation which numbered many husbandmen;[2] he uses nautical reflections in tracts for fishermen and sailors;[3] obstetrical metaphors in a tract for women in their confinement.[4] But the compelling motive behind much of his use of this method in his literary craft is his own daily immersion in the practice of occasional

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Affairs, *is an* holy *and* happy Art; *A* Walk, with God *very much lies in* this, *and is greatly assisted by it* . . . *Were Christians better skill'd in this*, *their worldly Business might be a* Help, *rather than a Hindrance to them in their way to Heaven*." "*Indeed this Design has been excellently serv'd in the Labours of those Servants of GOD*, Flavel *and* Steele: *but their* Treatises *are not common among us*: *neither is it to be supposed that they have gathered in* all the Sheaves *of this plentiful Harvest*. *Or*, *if we are in this method* treated *with the same things*, 'Tis *in a* different Method, *and with that* Fervor and Pungency *which is so peculiar to the Author*." *Vide* C. Mather, *Agricola* (Boston, 1727).

[1] C. Mather, *Military Duties* (Boston, 1687), p. 40.

[2] C. Mather, *Agricola* (Boston, 1727).

[3] C. Mather, *The Fisherman's Calling* (Boston, 1712); *The Religious Marriner* (Boston, 1700).

[4] C. Mather, *Elizabeth* (Boston, 1710).

reflections.

Perry Miller, however, has called Mather's occasional reflections an exaggerated, tasteless and tiresom version of what in others is agreeable,[1] a desperate substitute for interior stimulation to replace lost political power: "Thrust back into the self, the trembling soul looked at first timorously upon the things amid which God had placed him, and then found that there might be joy in the excitements they aroused within him."[2] This puts the worst possible interpretation on Mather's mystical interests, and ignores the deep rootage of this practice in American and English Puritanism. Miller has remarked upon Jonathan Edwards' greater skill at refining the poetry hidden beneath the surface of things, and finding genuine symbols there rather than strained allegories.[3] It is true that Mather's reflections are often, to say the least, homely.

> I was once emptying the Cistern of Nature, and making Water at the Wall. At the same Time, there came a Dog, who did so too, before me. Thought I; "What mean, and vile Things are the Children of Men, in this mortal State! How much do our natural Necessities abase us, and place us in some regard, on the same Level with the very Dogs!"[4]
>
> There are with me, in common with all the Children of Men, the usual Evacuations of Nature, to be daily attended. I would not only improve the Time which these call for, to form some Thoughts of Piety, wherein I may differ from the Brutes . . . and this I have usually already done; but I would now more particularly study that the Thoughts I form on these Occasions, may be of some abasing Tendency. The Actions

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[1] P. Miller, The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), pp. 213-14.

[2] P. Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), pp. 404-5.

[3] Jonathan Edwards, Images or Shadows of Divine Things, ed. by Perry Miller (New Haven, 1948), pp. 14-17.

[4] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 357 (June, 1700).

> themselves carry Humiliations in them; and a Christian ought alwayes to think humbly of himself, and be full of self-abasing and self-abhoring Reflections. By loathing of himself continually, and Being very sensible of what are his own loathsome Circumstances, a Christian does what is very pleasing to Heaven.[1]

But we would be on dangerous ground in suggesting that analogies like this cannot occasionally speak to fallen men of their condition. Mather's choice of symbols seems impossibly trivial and tasteless, but occasional reflections were from their beginning designed to speak to man through the most ordinary actions of daily life, such as rising in the morning (resurrection), disrobing and reclothing (justification), and washing (sanctification).[2] Karl Barth has posited the existence of typologies built into nature through the work of creation, including those which point to the 'dark side' of fallen reality (the black widow, for instance, and perhaps also Mather's "evacuations"). And there is a biblical basis for Mather's symbolistic response to the common things of Creation. Jesus himself seems to have found the events of daily life heavy with this kind of significance, either bearing the lineaments of a planned symbolism in the Creator's mind, or else malleable for allegorical purposes in the human imagination. This is why so many of his sayings have the richness, allusiveness, and density of content of a kind of folk poetry. It is not a poetry of nightingales and stars and other easily refinable 'poetic' coinage; it is a poetry which deals in common things, reminiscent of the ordinary modern objects of W. H. Auden's poems. The every day mysticism of the Puritan was closely allied to this strain of sensibility, continually jumping the gaps of experiences and situations with spark-flashes of supernatural insight. A flawed poetic imagination (which Mather's most assuredly was) would often emerge with similes and tropes which were unconsciously grotesque, at least in the form of their expression, but this is not to invalidate the reality of the mystical experience behind them. Thus it is not necessary to react to Mather's frequent 'tin ear' for appropriate symbolism by explaining away the whole enterprise as an unnatural interior sublimation of a frustrated urge for exterior power. Mather's homely reflections are not crabbed monstrosities; they are the normal Puritan product, while Edwards' were the result of the same sensibility heightened to the point of genius.

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[1] Ibid., II (New York, 1957), 69 (April, 1711).

[2] Cf. C. Mather, Diary, II (New York, 1957), 4, 42-3, 67, 113, 221.

There is, however, a form of occasional reflection which exposes Mather at his most questionable, both theologically and styllistically, and that is what we might call the 'symbolic judgment.' One characteristic of the Puritans frequently noted by their critics was the propensity to interpret events as 'providences,' rewards and (more often) punishments directly and discernibly flowing from the divine hand. Mather early adopted the habit of connecting uncomfortable events in his own life with the displeasure of God,[1] expressed as if the object of the Deity were, like that of Ko-Ko, to make the punishment fit the crime.[2] Thus, on the corporate level, he connects the accidental burning of the meeting-house in Boston with various 'fiery sins' preceding, including lust and contention.[1] The least dignified and most unintentionally humorous work of Mather along this line, however, has to do with symbolic providential judgments on individuals, as when he threatens insomnia to those who sleep in church.[2] He worries about his own maladies and their cryptic meaning:

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[1] The practice seems to be immediately derived from his father; cf. I. Mather, The Doctrine of Divine Providence (Boston, 1684), p. 65.

[2] The approach seems to have been well-intrenched among the Puritans who were interested in occasional reflections; Flavel, for instance, who is a prime model for much of Mather's work in this line, mentions one who died unable to eat because of a failure to say grace; vide Mather's A Family Sacrifice (Boston, 1703), p. 28.

> About the Middle of this Month, I lost abundance of precious Time, thro' tormenting Pains in my Teeth and Jawes; which kind of Pains have indeed produced mee many a sad Hour, in my short Pilgrimage . . . I sett myself, as well as I could for my Pains, to search and try my Wayes. I considered, I. Have I not sinned with my Teeth? How? By sinful, graceless excessive Eating. And by evil Speeches, for there are Literae dentales used in them?[3]

In January of 1697/8, suffering from ' a Time of much Calamity to mee' due to 'Epidemical and Pestilential Colds," he reminds himself that "I must enquire, whether, a malignant Cold, bee not the very distemper of my Soul; a cold Indisposition to Religion, accompanied with sinful Malignity."[4] Somewhat later we find him literally contemplating his navel:

> I would anatomically and particularly consider, every Part of my Body, and with as explicit an Ingenuity as may be, consider the several Actions, and Uses thereof; and then go on to consider, on what Methods I may serve my glorious Lord with them . . . Thus I would occasionally be awakened . . . when I suffer any Pain or Disorder in any Parts of my Body.[5]

One is tempted to suspect that the mind which finds time for this kind of activity does not have sufficient practical business to occupy its talents -- not because its political ambitions have been thwarted, but because it is devoting itself to an almost cenobitic polishing of the soul's piety, tending to the soul's smallest needs in introverted isolation from the demands and labors of God's kingdom. This is neither sound mysticism nor sanctification, but a kind of busy-work of the soul unconsciously designing to kill time in a spiritually respectable manner.

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[1] C. Mather, Advice from Taberah (Boston, 1711), p. 23.

[2] C. Mather, Vigilius (Boston, 1719), p. 8.

[3] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 24 (July, 1681).

[4] Ibid., I, 248 (January, 1697/8).

[5] Ibid., II, 75 (May, 1711).

3. *Private Prayer*

The Puritan theory of the spiritual life was organized around a two-way cycle of communication with God, in which prayer, the 'broadcasting' component of the cycle, was fully as important as meditation, the 'receiving' end. Mather is typical of Puritan spirituality in the high value he sets on "Secret Prayer,"

> . . . the very Vital Breath of Christianity: the Glory, the Comfort, the Armour of the Christian . . . The *Strong Sword of the Lord*, by which we *plague Leviathan*, *the crooked Serpent*, and *Slay the Dragon*, when he assaults us: The *Scourge* which the *Devil* foolishly makes for his *own Back*, when by his vexations he puts us upon it . . . The Grand *Engine* to carry on every Good *Design*; the true *Method* of keeping our selves in all *Safety*: the Presence Chamber where our Immortal King will be spoken withal! the streight way to the City of God: the *Golden Key* to unlock all the Treasures of Heaven.[1]

Prayer is both the main barometer of a soul's spiritual health and the principal means of securing a healthy state.[2] It is a main channel for the infusion of spiritual grace in the life:

> Let our Lives be filled with much *Prayer* to God, and our Souls will be filled with all the *fulness* of God. It is the Promise of God in Psal. 81 10: *Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it* . . . Frequent and fervent *Prayers* will marvellously dispose us to receive the fulness of him who *fills* only the *hungry with good things* . . . The soul *praying* unto God, is the soul *panting* after God. It shall be filled with him.[3]

It is a specific to insure spiritual prosperity, for "a *Praying* Soul, will be a *Thriving Soul*. Much prayer, as it were, keeps the Soul in a breathing *Sweat*, which by Degrees does consume all the Distempers of it. In our *Prayers*, all our *Graces* come to be Exercised, and so to be Strengthened, so to be perfected."[1] It is a primary weapon in spiritual conflict against the powers of darkness:

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[1] C. Mather, *The Retired Christian* (Boston, 1703), p. 2.

[2] C. Mather, *Verba Vivifica* (Boston, 1714), p. 5.

[3] C. Mather, *Batteries upon the Kingdom of the Devil* (London, 1695), p. 191.

> You cannot contrive a more effectual preservative, from the Hurts of *Temptation*, than *Prayer*; daily, wrestling, restless *Prayer*. The infamous Day of *Origen's* foul Apostasy was a day whereon he had been remiss in his morning *Prayers*. I will not tell you *Nazianzen's* story, of what a Devil was forced to own unto *Cyprian*, about his inability to work upon a *praying* Soul in his days . . . But this I am sure of, the *Trumpets of Gideon* did not more fright the *Midianites*, than the *Prayers* of the Faithful do all the Devils in the dark Regions.[2]

It is the main gateway to regeneration for ourselves, and can prevail upon God to regenerate others.[3] It is the principle aid in a daily walk with God, for "we should, may I so say, walk upon our knees; to talk much with God, is to walk much with Him."[4] Beyond this, the prayers of believers can result in the institution of Reformation in the church, and can affect even national destinies.[5]

All of this concentration upon what we may call the instrumental necessity of prayer -- its potency as a tool and a weapon in the spiritual life -- might seem to impersonalize the exercise, to turn it into an instrument of enlisting God's help and binding him to our goals, instead of an intimate communion with him. And it is true that Mather sometimed defines prayer as if it were pure request, as "the *Presentation of our*

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[1] C. Mather, *The Day, and the Work of the Day* (Boston, 1693), p. 48.

[2] C. Mather, *Military Duties* (Boston, 1687), p. 76.

[3] C. Mather, *What the Pious Parent Wishes for* (Boston, 1721), p. 19.

[4] C. Mather, *Several Sermons Concerning Walking with God* (Boston, 1689), p. 5.

[5] C. Mather, *Shaking Dispensations* (Boston, 1715), p. 32.

Desires unto the Glorious God."[1] Like most Puritans, he advised keeping what is very nearly a bookkeeping account of answers to prayer.[2] And yet even here his principal concern is for the appreciation of God's love disclosed in such answers:

> The Children of God having their *Prayers answered*, have the *Love of God* shining upon them, sealed unto them, in the Answers. Can any thing yield such a *Satisfaction* to a Soul, as the *Love of God* revealed unto it? . . . The *Answers of our Prayers*, bring to us ravishing Discoveries of it! When our good Things come to us, with such a Mark as this upon them, there is a Whisper of Heaven accompanying them; Here, take this, as a Token, that I am thy Father, and that I have loved thee.[3]

His concept of petition can sound almost magical: "Make use of [the name of Jesus] and you have what you ask for!"[4] But this is countered by his Calvinistic emphasis on submission to God's will, for "There is that which has been of old called, *The Hinge of Prayer*. All turns upon that Hinge; That *wherein our God shall be most Glorified*. This will infallibly be done."[5] He elsewhere states that the goals of prayer are not primarily to obtain our requests or even to inform Him of our need, but to realize His attributes, to rehearse and penetrate the meaning of Christian doctrine about Him, to profess our dependence upon Him, to nourish our communion with Him, to preserve the good order of our souls, and to support the heart under griefs.[6] Unlike mystical prayer in the Medieval and Counter-reformation traditions, which often calls for a quietistic suspension of the faculties, Puritan prayer engages all of these in hard effort: "True Prayer is Heart-Work, and Soul-Work."[1]

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[1] C. Mather, *Utilia* (Boston, 1716), p. 198.

[2] Helen C. White rather unjustly calls Puritan prayer "the housekeeping of the soul;" *vide* her *English Devotional Literature (Prose), 1660-1640* (Wisconsin, 1931), p. 175. Cf. Thomas Goodwin, *The Returne of Prayers* (London, 1636), which insists that an earnest enquiry after the results of prayer is an evidence of faith, and not a form of self-centered religiosity.

[3] C. Mather, *Utilia* (Boston, 1716), pp. 216-17.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 212.

[5] *Ibid*., p. 209.

[6] C. Mather, *The Day, and the Work of the Day* (Boston, 1693), p. 26.

> Our Understandings are to apprehend the Glories of the Infinite GOD, and His Precious CHRIST, when we fall down before Him. Our Memories must Recollect, what we know of Him, and what He had directed us to, Ask of Him, and How to Ask it. Our Affections must Embrace Him, and the Blessings tendered unto us, in His Covenant; and Loath our Sin, and Fear the Wrath due to us for our Sin.[2]

But it is not a mere multiplication of words, for "a Broken Heart, a Flaming Heart, a Gracious Heart, is of more Account with God, than all the Flourishing Expressions imaginable."[3]

Such prayer is only possible for the regenerate, for "men have the Grace to be much in Supplication, when that Spirit has once Renewed them, and possessed them; they have then a Spirit for Prayer continually."[4] Although Mather is convinced that only a live relationship with the Holy Spirit can lead to vital prayer, and urges that the first step in any prayer be the invoking of the Spirit's help, unlike some earlier Puritans he does not discourage the use of forms and models of prayer, for those novices who need these;[5] and he even offers some models of his own.[6] Still he is convinced that continued reliance on forms can be a dangerous crutch which will stifle spiritual growth, for "after all, a Soul touched with a sense of your Condition, and fired with a Sight of what you are, and what you want, and what your SAVIOR is willing to do for you, will cause you to

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[1] C. Mather, The Cure of Sorrow (Boston, 1709), p. 12.

[2] Ibid., pp. 12-13.

[3] Ibid., p. 14.

[4] C. Mather, The Day, and the Work of the Day (Boston, 1693), pp. 36-7.

[5] C. Mather, Family-Religion Urged (Boston, 1709), pp. 14 ff.

[6] C. Mather, The Sailours Companion (Boston, 1709), p. 42.

Pray beyond what any Forms in the World can do."[1] He is also inclined to recommend the Lord's Prayer, and a sort of prayer-trellis made of segments obtained from the scripture through meditation, as the best structural guides for prayer.[2]

The monastic regimens of Medieval piety, with their tradition extending back into the early centuries of the church, had observed a structured pattern of daily prayers at stated intervals, the canonical hours. While some forms of Anglican devotion, such as the group at Little Gidding, continued to make use of the canonical hours, most of English Protestantism considered them too close to Old Testament legalism, and countered with the notion that all hours of the day were to be considered holy.[3] This led to a stress on unstructured shorter prayers during the course of the day. But a need was still felt for a daily structure of stated prayers, based on biblical example. A triple pattern of daily prayer was drawn from the examples of David (Ps. 55:17) and Daniel (Da. 6:10), while another passage (Ps. 110:64) suggested a sevenfold pattern of prayer. It seems to have been the practice to commend the shorter regimen to the laity, and reserve the 'perfect nunber' for the clergy; and Mather apparently prayed at seven stated intervals during the day, though his son was under the impression that it was the very heterodox number of six.[4] In the Manuductio, he does not dare to recommend more than the number of three for ministerial candidates,[1] and he recommends twice or thrice daily for the average layman, with special emphasis on prayer at the beginning and close of the day.[2] Mather himself seems to take delight in those occasions where his duties led him to exceed the regular number of stated prayers, and pray ten times in an afternoon or an evening -- rather like a runner clocking his speed or a golfer noting his strokes.[3]

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[1] C. Mather, Instructions to the Living (Boston, 1717), p. 22.

[2] C. Mather, Family-Religion Urged (Boston, 1709), pp. 14 ff. Mather here recommends the adaptation of psalms, sermon points, and catechetical heads to the building of prayers.

[3] C. J. Stranks, Anglican Devotion (London, 1961), p. 26.

[4] C. Mather, Diary, II (New York, 1957), 769 (October, 1724); cf. Samuel Mather, Life of Cotton Mather (Boston, 1729), p. 19.

The practice of offering short, spontaneous prayers in times of special need or stress during the day was well-established in the Puritan tradition, as also in the preceding history of Christian spirituality.[4] Mather picked up the practice of such "ejaculations" directly from his father, who, he says, keep up a constant stream of such arrows launched toward the Throne of Grace, like Homer's heroes.[5] Mather's rationale for the practice was twofold: it was a means of remaining constantly in the presence of God during the day,[6] and it was necessary as a constant acknowledgment of dependence on God in case of special stresses or crises occurring, such as the meeting of heavy responsibilities or the repulsion of Satanic injections and temptations.[1] Mather was in the habit of listening to sermons also with ejaculatory applications, and tried to manage the more difficult feat of preaching with interwoven silent interjections for his congregation.[2] Very early in his life he set himself to pray in this manner for individuals he encountered in the course of his daily conversation:

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[1] C. Mather, Manuductio ad Ministerium (Boston, 1726), p. 108.

[2] C. Mather, Reasonable Religion (Boston, 1713), p. 94.

[3] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 337; II (New York, 1957), 5, 169.

[4] Gordon Wakefield, Puritan Devotion (London, 1957), p. 68. Pourrat notes that ejaculatory prayer as a means of 'praying without ceasing' is first mentioned by Augustine; vide Christian Spirituality, tr. by W. H. Mitchell and S. P. Jacques, I (London, 1922), 126. The practice was welcomed in High Church English piety (vide P. E. More and F. L. Cross, Eds., Anglicanism [London, 1957], pp. 615, 617). It was consequently a point of objection with some early Puritans (vide Horton Davies, The Worship of the English Puritans [Westminster, England] 1958 , p. 67.)

[5] C. Mather, Parentator (Boston, 1724), pp. 145-7, 182,

[6] C. Mather, Several Sermons Concerning Walking with God (Boston, 1689), p. 6.

> It has been a frequent Thing with mee, to redeem the *silent*, and otherwise, *thoughtless*, Minutes of my Time, in shaping Thousands of *ejaculatory Prayers* for my Neighbours. And by reciting a *Few* of them, the Way of my shaping the *Rest*, may bee conjectured . . . In passing along the *Street*, I have sett myself to *bless* thousands of persons, who never knew that I did it; with *secret Wishes*, after this manner sent unto Heaven for them.[3]

Very often these ejaculations were cast in the form of occasional reflections upon the persons prayed for:

> At a *Table*, where, I being the *youngest* of the company, it was not proper for *mee* to discourse at all, and the Discourse of *others* were too trivial, to bee worthy of my Attention . . .

Casting my Eye upon,	Ejaculations.
The Gentlewoman that *carved* for us.	*Lord*, *carve*, of they Graces and Comforts, a *rich portion*, unto that Person.
In passing along the *Street* . . .	
A *tall* Man.	Lord, give that Man, *High Attainments* in Christianity: lett him fear God, *above many*.[4]

Here again we are in the presence of something which verges on the ridiculous; but we must remember that Mather was only twenty when he wrote these notes, and also that he persisted in this laborious dedication all his life, with a relentless determination to make every gully and hillock in the acreage of his life bear fruit for God.

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[1] C. Mather, *Parentator* (Boston, 1724), pp. 145-7.

[2] C. Mather, *Diary*, I (New York, 1957), 108-9 (December, 1685-6).

[3] C. Mather, *Diary*, I (New York, 1957), 81, 83 (February, 1683/4).

[4] *Ibid*.

In a tract on the necessity of 'being brief' in conversations about and with the Lord, *Brata Brevitas* (1712), Mather comments that Christ and other authorities inclined to favor ejaculatory prayer over long sessions of more formal prayer, for " the ancients thought it best, to *Pray Briefly*; but *Very Often*, *Very Often*, to be Engaged in it."[1] Nevertheless, one of the most noticeable features of Mather's own prayer life, and one of which he himself was proudest, was the great number of days and nights of secret prayer which he clocked in his lifetime, which amounted to some four hundred and fifty.[2] Here again he adopted the practice directly from his father, who held a monthly day of prayer "even with rigid fasting;"[3] but this method of devotion was firmly established among Puritans, especially the clergy, from the time of Rogers on.[4] Mather's son notes that he began the practice of whole days of fasting and prayer at fourteen, directed by the example of his father and by Scudder's *Christian's Daily Walk.*[5] Mather himself observes that the practice ultimately traces back to the early church fathers, quoting Cyprian and Tertullian to justify it.[6] In March of 1701/2, under the influence of his patristic reading, Mather began a new practice related to these days of prayer:

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[1] C. Mather, *Grata Brevitas* (Boston, 1712), p. 14.

[2] R. and L. Boas, *Cotton Mather, Keeper of the Puritan Conscience* (New York, 1928), p. 258.

[3] C. Mather, *Parentator* (Boston, 1724), p. 41.

[4] Cf. I. Morgan, *The Godly Preachers of the Elizabethan Church* (London, 1965), p. 167; G. R. Cragg, *Puritanism in the Period of the Great Persecution* (Cambridge, England, 1957), pp. 152-3.

[5] Samuel Mather, *Life of Cotton Mather* (Boston, 1729), p. 8.

[6] C. Mather, *The Good Old Way* (Boston, 1706), p. 86.

> I called now to Mind, that the primitive Christians, in Obedience to that Commandment of Watching unto Prayer, sometimes had their Vigils . . . To spend a good Part of a Night sometimes in Prayer, and so take the Advantage of a nocturnal Solitude, and abridge themselves of their usual Rest, for the sake of a devout Conversation with Heaven; they found God often rewarding the Devotions of such Vigils, with a more than ordinary Degree of heavenly Consolation. Accordingly I resolved, that I would this Night, make some Essay towards a Vigil. I dismissed my dear Consort unto her own Repose; and in the Dead of the Night, I retired into my Study; and there casting myself into the Dust, prostrate on my Study-floor before the Lord, I was rewarded with Communications from Heaven, that cannot be uttered. There I lay, a long while wrestling with the Lord; and I received some strange Intimations from Heaven, about the Time and Way of my Death, and about several other Points about which my Mind may be too sollicitous. Lord! what is Man, that thou shouldest thus visit Him! If these be Vigils, I must (as far as the sixth Commandment will allow,) have some more of them.[1]

This was not the only instance in which Mather showed a remarkably disciplined inventive zeal in his approach to marathon prayer. At the age of eighteen he observes,

> As the last Week, I kept a Day of Supplication, so I was desirous this Week to keep a Day of Thanksgiving, in secret Places before the Lord. I never knew of any person, or heard of more than one Person (margin: My Grandfather Cotton), who did accustome themselves unto such an Exercise. But the Good Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, having taken Possession of my sinful Heart, I became inclined and instructed, unto such Methods of Religion, as were now before mee. I was now taught of God, thus to spend this Day.[2]

He goes on to indicate that the content of the Day of Thanksgiving included, in the morning, a recollection of all God's mercies and the aggravations of these mercies in his sins; and then, in the afternoon, thanksgiving for his particular calling as a minister (including his deliverance from stuttering and his growing reputation), and his general calling as a Christian. In the evening, he concluded with prayer and meditation on the theme of 'rendering to the Lord for all His Benefits,' including the need to adhere to his rules for Christian living and use his time carefully for God.[3] A few years later, he lays out for us the plan of an ordinary fast-day of Supplication; involving a mixture of biblical reading 'largely turned into Prayers,' meditation on his sin, singing of hymns and psalms, meditation with occasional reflections, and supplications for his own spiritual growth and the prospering of his ministry.[1] The content of the day is not properly intercession, since it is almost wholly centered on spiritual self-improvement. The same is true of the substance of the Vigil of June 23/24, 1711,[2] and in the triple-header series of days of prayer Mather held on April 13-15, 1703, in which he spent a day confessing his sins, a day resigning himself to God's will, and a day asking for angelic support in his ministry and protection from spiritual assaults.[3] While there is other evidence that Mather's concerns for supplication extended beyond his own spiritual life, he seems to have considered his days of private prayer mainly as instruments of his own spiritual growth, and reserved his wider concerns for public days of prayer.

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[1] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 421-2 (March, 1701/2).

[2] Ibid., 18 (June, 1681).

[3] Ibid., 18-21.

The mechanism of the Day of Prayer is first of all commended by Mather to pastors, as indispensable to their effective ministry;[4] but he frequently recommends the practice to the laity. In Bonifacius, he notes that days of public and private thanksgiving should be kept by Christians "of the Finer Mould";[5] and in Reasonable Religion (1713) he gives instructions on how to manage a Day of Humiliation and Supplication and a Day of Thanksgiving.[6]

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[1] Ibid., 56-9 (May, 1683).

[2] Ibid., II (New York, 1957), p. 83.

[3] Ibid., 477-80.

[4] C. Mather, Manuductio ad Ministerium (Boston, 1726), p. 109.

[5] C. Mather, Bonifacius (Boston, 1710), p. 47 ; cf. Pastoral Desires (Boston, 1712), p. 76.

[6] C. Mather, Reasonable Religion (Boston, 1713), pp. 97 ff.; the directions are identical to his own practice as recorded in the Diary.

He even hesitantly recommends the practice of vigils to lay leaders.

> I will not proceed in Describing, much less in Prescribing, the Asceticks of the Ancient Christians; they were not always free from Superstition. Yet will I prevail with my self, to mention one of Their Noble Exercises . . . To spend a good part of a NIGHT sometimes in Prayer . . . I would not carry this Affair too far. However, if such things are by any thought not fit to be Practiced, yet there may be a Profanity in Deriding of them.[1]

There is some consciousness here on Mather's part of the fact that he is asking a great deal of laymen; one wonders where they would have found the time, but Mather apparently assumed that everyone had a plastic schedule such as his own. There is also a marginal awareness of the problematic side of the "Ascetick" approach to the Christian life, and an indication that Mather himself was criticized in his own time for advocating it. But his overall position seems to have been that clergy and laity alike should practice these day-long retreats, as often as once a month, which was his own general practice, together with a day of prayer on one's birthday; for "we can't have our Desires, without whole Days of Prayer, to ripen us for the Desired Enjoyments."[2]

4. Family Devotions

The duplex mechanism of meditation on the Word combined with prayer was employed by the Puritans in two main public applications, along with its private usage as described above. The first of these was in those modified and abbreviated worship-services that were held in 'the church in the home,' the Puritan family devotions. The early Puritan conforming ministers, according to one opinion, chose to construct a model of the perfect church in the worship of the Christian home, when they were frustrated in their projected reformation of the external church.[1] At any rate, William Perkins, a moderate yet consistent conforming Puritan, defined the family unit as if it were a small church; the spiritual importance he gives it is almost patriarchal, and is in sharp contract to the devaluation of family life in the Medieval ethic, with its emphasis on virginity as a condition of perfection.[2] Perkins' position was normative for the subsequent Puritan tradition, and Richard Baxter considered that a large part of his 'Reformation' of the Kidderminster parish -- which looks suspiciously like what later terminology would call a 'revival' -- was due to the firm establishment of family religion.[3]

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 102.

[2] C. Mather, *Utilia* (Boston, 1716), p. 87.

Mather was especially concerned to energize family piety within his church, and wrote a number of sermons and tracts on the subject. He approaches his people with an air-tight sociological and theological rationale for the practice. There are three kinds of societies instituted among men, he notes: the Domestic, the Ecclesiastical, and the Political; and of these, the Domestic is the first instituted and in some ways the most pivotally important.[4] Every society among men owes some acknowledgment to God for its conduct, and so the domestic society should have some periods of corporate worship involving the husband and wife, the children, and the servants together.[1] Following Baxter's Christian Directory and general Puritan tradition,[2] Mather recommended two daily periods of joint family worship, morning and evening, along with table graces at every meal -- in short, "let no Season, for Family prayer go without it."[3] He notes that family worship can be a bore if it is not discreetly managed, for "on the one side, Family-Prayer should not be Tedious; but on the other side, it should not be hastily Slubbered over."[4] The content of the family service should include the reading of the Scriptures, singing hymns or psalms, family-instruction, and prayer.[5] Apart from scripture, material for meditation in the service may include published sermons (or, on a sabbath, the sermon of the day), catechisms, and devotional writings.[6] Every member of the family should be encouraged to take part in prayer, and there may even be set prayers, but these are to be reasonably informal.[7] Instruction of the family should ideally include a genuine pastoral probing of their spiritual condition by the pater familias, inquiring into their current spiritual experience, reproving sin, encouraging prayer, and even evangelizing those not professing conversion.[8]

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[1] I Morgan, The Godly Preachers of the Elizabethan Church (London, 1965), p. 214.

[2] C. H. and K. George, The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation (Princeton, 1961), p. 275.

[3] John T. McNeill, A History of the Cure of Souls (New York, 1951), p. 266.

[4] C. Mather, A Good Master Well Served (Boston, 1696), p. 5. Francke, again perhaps under Puritan influence, made the institution of family worship part of his reformation in the community at Halle, vide A. W. Nagler, Pietism and Methodism (Nashville, 1918), p. 63.

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[1] C. Mather, Family-Religion Urged (Boston, 1709), p. 3.

[2] A. Horton Davies, The Worship of the English Puritans (Westminster, England, 1948), p. 278.

[3] C. Mather, A Family Sacrifice (Boston, 1703), p. 27 . He adds, however, that on the sabbath it might be well to extend the number of corporate family worship meetings to four.

[4] Ibid., p. 30.

[5] Ibid., pp. 30-8.

[6] C. Mather, Pastoral Desires (Boston, 1712), p. 79. Mather included in his own family's diet such solid authors as Francke and Matthew Henry; vide the Diary, II (New York, 1957), 378, 728.

[7] C. Mather, Pastoral Desires (Boston, 1712), p. 79.

[8] C. Mather, Small Offers (Boston, 1689), pp.

It is not hard to discern the fact, between the lines of Mather's writing, that this kind of semipastoral supervision in the home was an ideal hard to realize in the practical daily experience of parishioners. He remarks upon a multitude of excuses which are used to beg off the duty of family exercises. The most frequent of these is lack of oratorical skill in prayer; against this, Mather advises the use of form prayers or adaptation of psalms or other scriptures, and notes that it takes little talent to cry to God out of a real and desperate sense of one's need, which is what family prayer must be if it is to be more than an exercise in aesthetics.[1] Against the objection that family worship as managed by most can only aspire to a dead form inherited from tradition, he remarks, "May not a good as well as a bad Conversation be received by Tradition from our Fathers? . . . Will not Families that issue from godly Families, retain at least a Form of Godliness? And will not a Form of Godliness, often by the grace of God, prove a Vehicle for the power of Godliness?"[2] Mather simply brushes aside the complaint of lack of time, or the intractability of the family, as rationalizations for a lack of heart for God and for prayer.[3] As incentives for the half-hearted, Mather lays on a heavy barrage of typically Puritan warnings for prayerless households: such homes are particularly subject to the plague, and should, like quarantined houses, have an inscription of 'Lord Have Mercy' written over the lintel because of their blighting influence in a community,[4] for "if your Houses be not Warmed with your Prayers, the fierce Wrath of God abideth on them."[1]

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[1] C. Mather, Family-Religion Urged (Boston, 1709), pp. 14 ff.; A Family Sacrifice (Boston, 1703), pp. 23-4.

[2] C. Mather, Family Religion Urged (Boston, 1709), p. 8.

[3] C. Mather, Small Offers (Boston, 1689), p.

[4] C. Mather, Family-Religion Urged (Boston, 1709), p. 9.

> Behold, the great God has by the Statute Laws of Heaven, ordained that a Prayerless Family shall have all manner of Calamities inflicted on it. The Lions, the Devils of the pit below, will devour the unhappy Master of such a Family.[2]
>
> The Curse of God is the Sauce in every Dish, the Curse of God is the Cover to every Bed, in that lamentable Family. Houses molested with Devils, are not more miserable, than houses destitute of Prayers. I have seen it in an house, when the Devils have had Possession of a Child, that when Family-Prayer began, the Devils would make Hideous Roarings and Noises in the Room, being under a Vexation thereat, which was intolerable to them. Truly, the Devils have no Disturbance in Houses where Family-Prayer is not maintained; prayerless houses are haunted houses, and the Fiends of Darkness reign and ramp there, without Control.[3]

5. Sabbath Worship

A strict keeping of the first day of the week as a spiritual retreat had been normative since the outset of the Puritan movement. The exact historical origins of Puritan Sabbatarianism are not precisely determinable, but the careful observance of 'the Lord's day,' in opposition to the looser policy of the Reformers and the antilegalistic Anabaptists, is probably traceable to the influence of the Rhenish Reformers Bucer and Bullinger.[4] In British church history, it appears in the north with John Knox' First Book of Discipline,[5] and in England with the activity of the legalistic and anticeremonial Puritan, John Hooper, and his successor, John Bradford.[6] The much more stringent and extreme emphasis of Nicholas Bowndes in the 1590's established the strict Sabbath as a universally recognized distinctive of Puritanism, as ceremonialism yielded to Sabbatarianism as the cause celebre and point of contention between the Puritan party and Laud.[1] Spread popularly by the Puritan devotional manuals, and entrenched in their major theological systems, the Puritan Sabbath survived Laud and the Restoration, and very nearly conquered the field by the end of the seventeenth century, as Anglican practice in some quarters capitulated and embraced the stricter view.[2]

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[1] C. Mather, Small Offers (Boston, 1689), pp. 29.

[2] Ibid., p. 38.

[3] Ibid., p. 41

[4] F. E. Stoeffler, The Rise of Evangelical Pietism (Leiden, 1965), p. 39.

[5] R. Bronkema, The Essence of Puritanism (Goes, 1929), p. 165.

[6] Stoeffler, op. cit., pp. 39-41. Hooper was influenced by Bullinger, Bradford by Bucer.

Undoubtedly a main part of the reason for this conquest was not theological in nature but pragmatic. In spite of the drawbacks of its legalism, the Puritan Sabbath 'worked' as an instrument for the development of piety, for it was, in essence, a miniature weekly Protestant 'retreat.' Both Catholics and Protestants in the post-Medieval period found that if the monastic solution to the problem of spiritual culture is transcended to move the church into an innerworldly stance, some new methodology of intensive spiritual nurture must be developed to prevent the church from dissolving into the world. In the Catholic Counter-Reformation, Ignatius Loyola and his order developed the methodology of the prolonged retreat followed by re-entry into the common world, with the retreatant inspired by enlarged knowledge and an awakened sense of vocation. The retreat became, for Catholics, a sort of portable monastery; and in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries it was one of the main primary engines for energizing the church spiritually.[3]

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[1] Stoeffler, op. cit., p. 65: Bronkema, op. cit., p. 164.

[2] C. J. Stranks, Anglican Devotion (London, 1961), pp. 49, 163.

[3] Cf. P. Pourrat, Christian Spirituality, trans. by W. H. Mitchell and S. P. Jacques, III (Westminster, Md., 1953), 42, and IV, tr. by D. Attwater (Westminster, Md., 1955), 95 ff. Pourrat notes that the seventeenth century was the golden age of retreats in Catholicism, although some had been held earlier without retreat houses (the first of these was established in 1664); and he states that the practice has since become normative in lay nurture.

On the Reformed side, Bucer in Strassbourg, the early Puritans with their prophesying sessions, and the later Pietism with its conventicles, developed the 'small group interchange' methodology. Later evangelicalism emerged with the protracted revival meeting, and later in the nineteenth century adopted from Catholicism the retreat methodology and applied it to summer 'spiritual life conferences.' The element which all these methods shared is prolonged and intensive study of doctrinal truth in an atmosphere of prayerful response. Now, the later Puritans of Mather's period did not use the prophesying sessions (which were originally a stopgap substitute for the muzzled pulpit), nor did they have prolonged retreats; but they did have a miniature day of retreat each week: the strict Sabbath.[1] The weekly discharge of accumulated pastoral potential in the long sermons and the ministers' marathon prayers, absorbed by the people with an appetite (or at least a tolerance) which can only amaze us in our day, was a powerful instrument for the transformation of the English and American character.[2]

Cotton Mather had a particularly high valuation for the strict Puritan Sabbath. His concern was a blend of pragmatic pietism with ceremonial legalism. He felt that the Sabbath _worked_ as an instrument of nurture, since "If you look through the World, you shall see that Mens _Religion_ is as their _Sabbath_ is. The _Sabbath_ is the _engine_ by which, by the *Bible*, true Remembrance of God is kept alive."[1]

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[1] The public Days of Prayer in Massachusetts might be considered a form of retreat and a separate method of revitalization in themselves. I have not given them lengthy separate consideration here mainly because they are treated by Mather more or less as a transferred Sabbath, and because their basic contribution to spiritual renewal does not seem to differ from that of the Lord's Day.

[2] This pragmatic usage of the Sabbath went far beyond Calvin, whose original position on the Sabbath, expressed in the _Institutes_, was rather loose. Although his later commentary on Genesis is somewhat more strict, even here he regards the day not as an engine of piety, but rather as a time for worship, for thoughtful celebration of the Resurrection, and gratitude to God. _Vide_ Bronkema, _op. cit._, p. 174.

> The *Lords day* is the Time, wherein the *Holy Spirit* usually Visits the Souls of men, with the Influences of His *Grace*: All the *Defective Circumstances*, in which your Souls continue to this Day; All your *Ignorance* in the Things of God; all your *Inactivity* and *Inability* for a Walk in his Ways; All the Power that *Sin* and *Satan* retain over you: and all your fearful want of Preparation for *Death* and *Judgment*; Is it not all very much owing to your *Profanations* of the *Lord's day*? If you had *Sabbatized* as you should have done, would not your Souls have been in a better condition, than they are at this Day?[2]

However Mather felt that the Sabbath was not only a useful tool; it was also "a seal of the whole covenant of grace, a seal common to both testaments," the violation of which would bring spiritual desolation.[3] It was not just that a strict Sabbatarean would be healthy and a loose one would suffer malnutrition; God would reward the first, and curse the second.

> The Reformed Churches abroad have commonly indulged themselves, in loose *Principles*, and loose *practices*, about the Lords-Day; as if the Necessity of keeping the Lords-Day, a *Figmentum Anglicanum*; An English Fancy! But surely, tis no Fancy that *Christianity* runs at a low Ebb, in those Churches, aid that horrendous Desolations are continually harassing of them. Oh! That they would once at last Enquire, Whether their breaking of *Gods Rest*, be not a grand Reason why God with such plagues and storms, has been breaking of *Theirs*. The *English Nation* has better *Sabbaths* than any other nation in the World, except another Nation on the same island with it. But an open violence there once offered unto the *Sabbaths* of God, quickly issued in an *Horrible Tempest* on the Authors of it, and a *Wrath unto the uttermost*. . . . Oh! *Consider this, ye that forget the* LORDS DAY, lest he tear you in Pieces, and there be none to deliver you.[4]

Mather's whole view of the Sabbath is consisely summarized in *The Day Which the Lord Hath Made* (1707), a tract which he reprinted in an

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[1] C. Mather, *Several Sermons Concerning Walking with God* (Boston, 1689), p. 80.

[2] C. Mather, *A Town in its Truest Glory* (Boston, 1712), pp. 38-9.

[3] C. Mather, *The Day Which the Lord Hath Made* (Boston, 1707), p. 28.

[4] *Ibid*., pp. 34, 36.

Indian translation, apparently judging this to be one of the weightier points of the faith without which the Indians could not survive. He sets out two propositions: first, that there is to be a day in each week holy to the Lord (initially, the seventh day, to point to God's grace in Creation); and second, that in these times God has appointed the Day of Resurrection to supplant the seventh day, to point to Redemption and to prepare man for a better world. He appeals to the fathers (Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Augustine, Ambrose, and Origen) to prove that in primitive times a careful observation of the day was the mark of a Christian.[1] As for how the day is to be kept, he denies that it is in any sense a fast day, but asserts that it is a time when men should cease from "all tedious works which are the curse of sin," works other than those which are in some way directly related to God's service. Note that the Lord's Day is to be occupied by work, not primarily by rest; we are to cease from our own works, but not from 'God's works.' Following Origen, Mather advises that the day be wholly given over to observing God's works, and not polluted by idleness, profaneness, by "Sins of Omission; By Sleeping immoderately; by Walking only to take the Air; by Leaving undone, what we ought to do."[2] If leisure is inappropriate, so is mere amusement, for "if our Labours are prohibited on the Lords-day, methinks our Pleasures must be so too. It was no mistake in Austin, That it were better to Plough, than to Dance on the Lords-day. 'Tis Gods time, and will not admit any Pastime."[3]

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[1] Mather here and elsewhere deplores the use of 'Sunday' as a designation for the Lord's Day, and laments the fact that the fathers fell into this habit, which he explains as a device of theirs to bridge the cultural gap in their witness to paganism.

[2] C. Mather, The Day Which the Lord Hath Made (Boston, 1707), pp. 19-20.

[3] Ibid., p. 18.

To fill the painful emptiness left by the evacuation of ordinary pursuits and pleasures, Mather recommends "Heart-melting Meditations on the Words and Works of God, and especially on those points whereto the Lords-day has a special Reference."[1] Public and private worship of God are also part of the pattern of godly labors. Mather nowhere mentions works of corporal mercy as part of the Sabbath regimen, probably because the average layman had all he could do to fit in all the prayer and meditation which the ministers advised and structured into the day.

Legal ceremonial and pragmatic pietistic motives are closely interwoven in another refinement of Mather's position on the use of the first day: the question of whether Saturday or Sunday evening ought to be considered part of the twenty-four hour period which was, strictly, 'the Sabbath.' This had long been a point of contest between Puritan rabbis, and the New Englanders differed freely about the matter. Increase Mather evidently held with John Cotton that Sunday evening was part of the holy day, allowing that most other ministers hold otherwise and that Christians may differ in love on such matters.[2] Cotton Mather is agnostic about the problem,[3] but arrives at a solution typical of his omnivorous piety: both evenings are to be kept holy![4] It would be inappropriate not to make a fit preparation for the Sabbath on Saturday evening;[5] but besides this, -- it would be harmfully inefficient to allow the piety of a well-spent Sabbath to be dissipated in an ill-spent evening:

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[1] Ibid., p. 21.

[2] Increase Mather, "To the Reader," in C. Mather, A Good Evening for the Best of Dayes (Boston, 1708).

[3] C. Mather, The Day Which the Lord Hath Made (Boston, 1707), p. 25.

[4] C. Mather, Man Eating the Food of Angels (Boston, 1710), p. 25.

[5] C. Mather, The Day Which the Lord Hath Made (Boston, 1707), pp. 34-5.

> Christian, Why should we lose the Heat of the Day, (as one aptly Expresses) it, in the cool of the Evening? Why should we let useless Discourses, hurtful Distractions, carnal Excursions, in the Evening, Extinguish the Frame which the Devotions of the Day had Enkindled in us? . . . Bells, and Saints, of a good Metal, will keep the Sounds, when the Strokes are over.[1]

Mather recommends using the Sabbath evening for "Savoury Conferences" if visiting is absolutely necessary, meditation, prayer, family-worship or catechizing, or perhaps attending the Young People's meetings which he inaugurated partly to cure the misuse of this time. The Mathers were particularly concerned about the increasing occurrence of ungoverned 'night-walking' by the unoccupied youth of Boston, which was occasioning a "Danger that among many People, the Dies Dominicus, will conclude, in a, Vespera Daemoniaca; It will be, The Lords Day, but it will be, Satans Evening."[2] He comments that it even looks as if New Englanders were weary of the Sabbath.[3]

Those who were spiritually alert and willing undoubtedly thrived under the Puritan system of a weekly day-long retreat. Indeed, there are certain features about this technique of short weekly retreats which recommend it over the pattern of brief (and often nominal) Sunday attendance, combined with widely separated retreat or conference experiences, which is the rule in many Protestant and Catholic churches today. The average Puritan obtained more 'training in Christianity' in one month, through the Sabbath ministries, than many Protestants do in a year, even with midweek discussion-sessions and small group meetings.

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[1] Ibid., p. 26.

[2] C. Mather, A Good Evening for the Best of Dayes (Boston, 1708), p. 18.

[3] Ibid., p. 19.

Of course, we have long been aware of the unpleasant features on the other side of the ledger. The ritual observance of recurrent holy days was a part of the Old Testament legal pattern which Paul, the Reformers, and the Puritans themselves repudiated; and yet the irony is that these latter really substituted fifty-two holy days in the year for the few they abolished. Mather observes that "The New England Churches make a Difference between _Taking_ a _Time_ _to_ _Do_ _a_ _Sacred_ _Work_, and the _Doing_ _a_ _Work_ to _keep_ _a_ _Sacred_ _Time_."[1] But we have already shown that there is an indissoluble mixture of pragmatic spiritual strategy and ritual asceticism in the Puritan and Matherian definition of the Sabbath. The fact is that the New England ministers were constantly having to tell their people what to do to fill up the time, rather than seizing, adapting and molding time to provide room for an organic spirituality springing up among the people. An approach to the Sabbath which was centered on nurture instead of ritual observance would have relaxed its discipline to meet the children, the neophytes and the unconverted where they were, instead of presenting them with a legal demand for the full measure of mature godliness.

The fact that the Sabbath was a ritual holy day was further complicated by the Puritan definition of it as a day of holy work, rather than a day of rest. Whereas the Old Testament use of holy days and of the sabbath in particular was anti-ascetic -- feasting was prescribed more often than fasting, there is no prohibition of games or recreation, and the godward response is defined in terms of worship, reflection on God's works, and gratitude -- the Puritan doctrine of vocation spilled over into the use of Sunday, making it just another day of strenuous labor but of a more spiritual sort. Here we touch upon something symbolic of the whole of the problem of Puritanism. The Puritan Sabbath takes a day which for Calvin was to be one of pure response to God's grace, and laboriously insists that this grace be 'worked into' the soul by spiritual hard labor. It is therefore no accident that the Sabbath question assumed so large a place in the Puritan movement.[1]

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[1] C. Mather, _Ratio_ _Disciplinae_ (Boston, 1726), p. 187.

6. Sacramental Piety

Extensive comment on the content of the Puritan church service, and particularly the ministry of preaching, will be reserved for a later chapter dealing with Mather's pastoral practice, but it is appropriate here to consider his treatment of the Sacraments as means of grace.

Critics of the sacramental practice of nineteenth century Revivalism, such as the Mercersberg theologian John Nevin, have correctly indicated that some movements which evolved from Puritan stock declined considerably from the high regard for the sacraments characteristic of the Reformers.[2] The low-church, almost Anabaptist morphology of the later Revivalism made this inevitable. But the Puritanism of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries did not share this deficiency. In the matter of the Lord's Supper, the Puritans believed in frequent but careful Communion, preceded and accompanied by lengthy and serious meditation and self-examination. The importance of this sacrament for Puritans is indicated by the proliferation of guides and manuals for communicants in their literature of piety. The number and extensiveness of these suggests a sacramental concern which the modern Protestant would expect only in Anglican or Roman Catholic authors.[1]

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[1] Other components of the Puritan/Pietist experientialist movement generally sought to ameliorate the strict sabbatarianism of the English Puritans. Baxter, as usual, held a moderate position on this issue (vide Hugh Martin, Puritanism and Richard Baxter [London, 1954], p. 109). Among the Pietists, certain of the Dutch school, e. g. Cocceius and Labadie, adopted a non-ceremonial usage of the day, somewhat looser than the Puritans, mainly for the expediencies of piety; vide J. O. Bemesdorfer, Pietism and Its Influence upon the Evangelical United Brethren Church (Annville, Pa., 1966), p. 43. Spener and Francke adopted a mitigated Puritan Sabbath, but placed their main emphasis on nurture rather than legal obligation, in characteristic Lutheran fashion; cf. A. W. Nagler, Pietism and Methodism (Nashville, 1918), p. 54; Erhard Peschke, Studien zur Theologie August Hermann Franckes, I (Berlin, 1964), p. 101. Wesley retained the Puritan Sabbath as consistent with his own kind of 'methodism,' as Nagler indicates (op. cit., p. 140).

[2] Cf. J. H. Nichols, Romanticism in American Theology (Chicago, 1961), pp. 84 ff.

Mather himself was the author of several such manuals, and his *Diary* reveals that he took the Lord's Supper with the utmost seriousness as a means of strengthening his own spiritual life.[2] His concern for the numbers of scrupulous persons withdrawing from the sacrament testifies to his belief in its spiritual efficacy:

> It would, Oh! how mightily confirm your *Faith*, yea, strengthen your *Sight*; of, *The Doctrine of God your Saviour!* It would *Exercise* the *Graces* of God in your Hearts; and the *Exercise* would be a Sensible *Improvement* of them. It would furnish you with *Remedies* for all the *Distempers* in your Minds . . . It would *Comfort* you under your *Temptations*; and bring home the Everlasting *Love* of God unto you. It would admit you to intimate Interviews with *Heaven*, and advance you to *Heavenly* Satisfactions and Assurances; be a Sweet Emblem of your Coming to *Sit* with your Saviour in His *Heavenly Places*. Oh! why will you Deny to yourselves, these *Great Consolations of God*?[3]

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[1] On the Puritan approach to the Supper, cf. Gordon Wakefield, *Puritan Devotion* (London, 1957), pp. 42-6; Horton Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans* (Westminster, England, 1948), p. 182; W. W. Biggs, "Preparation for Communion: A Puritan Manual," *Congregational Quarterly,* XXXII (1954), 17-27. C. J. Stranks, in *Anglican Devotion* (London, 1961), p. 53, notes that the longest single chapter in Lewis Bayly's phenomenally popular *Practice of Piety* is on the subject of preparation for communion.

[2] E. g. C. Mather, *Diary,* I (New York, 1957), 64-5 (June, 1683), on Mather's meditations at the Lord's table.

[3] C. Mather, *Winter Piety* (Boston, 1712), p. 22; cf. the almost identical passages in *A Monitor for Communicants* (Boston, 1714), pp. 2-3, and *Pastoral Desires* (Boston, 1712), p. 45

When we examine the reasons for Mather's appreciation of the Supper, however, we discover that he is more interested in it as a means of 'leverage' for spiritual self-improvement than as a declaration, or a means, of grace. While many Puritans were closer to Calvin than to Zwingli on the doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the sacrament, and did not conceive of the elements as bare signs or memorials,[1] Mather nowhere alludes to the direct presence of Christ in the Supper. He does admit and emphasize the infusion of supernatural grace and illumination through the working of the Holy Spirit, but does not directly connect this with the presence of the Second Person of the Trinity or with the reception of the elements. He is far more interested in the 'improvement' of the sacrament through extensive preparation before it, and meditation on biblical and doctrinal truth during it, than he is in the actual consummation of the sacrament.

Under the term 'preparation,' Mather includes, first of all, what he calls 'habitual preparation' for the Lord's Table, which appears to be simply the work of preparation involved in initial conversion, embracing a consideration and personal ratification of the covenant of grace, contemplation of the crucified Savior, and the urgent seeking of a sensible work of grace in the heart. Once a man has done this, however, he needs to come to each new Communion with a work of 'actual preparation,' in which he reviews the points of his habitual preparation, and also engages in extensive self-examination.[2]

> Now, In your _Actual Preparation_, One thing is to be this; You must actually go over again the Points of your _Habitual Preparation_. _Actually_ Do each of those _Three Things_ over again, by which you will

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[1] Wakefield, _op. cit._, 51-2.

[2] C. Mather, _A Monitor for Communicants_ (Boston, 1714), pp. 5-8.

> make it sure, That you have Really done them. No Proof like This; You best prove that you have done the Things that accompany Salvation, by Doing of them. But then, another thing of great consequence to be now attended, is, A Self-Examination.[1]
>
> In this Time, you would set before your selves the Exposition of the Ten Commandments in your Catechisms, and Confess, & Bewail the Sins, which from thence you would find your selves chargeable withal, and fly to the Blood of your Saviour for the Pardon of them, and earnestly declare that you Look upon all of them with all Abhorrence of Soul, & give up yourselves unto God, with very firm Resolutions to Lead a Godly and Sober, and Righteous life, and with unutterable Agony beg the Spirit of Grace to take possession of you.[2]
>
> You cannot be insensible, That this your Self-Examination, must be accompanied with all other Devotions, that may be suitable for a Soul Preparing to meet the Lord: with Contrition for Sin; and Confession of it; with New Resolutions of a Better Life; with the Supplications of, One Striving to Enter into the Straight Gate; And with Reading the Word of God, and Books which may bring the Coals from the Altar to your Soul.[3]

If any man is willing to go through this kind of preparation, Mather is ready to receive him at the table of the Lord, for "Tho' you are not fully sure, of your Sincerity, yet you may come, and you may do it in Faith: Inasmuch as you have no plain Evidence remaining, that will determine a Predominant Hypocrisy. You have now no Evident Bar to your doing of your Duty, and so you may and must go on with your Duty."[4] Thus, as we have seen, he practices a modified Stoddardeanism, in which the sacrament is basically used as a tool for conversion if not as a converting ordinance; the difference is that Mather will not simply invite all those who would receive grace to the Supper, but invites instead all those who are willing to prepare to receive it.[5]

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[1] C. Mather, Pastoral Desires (Boston, 1712), p. 53.

[2] C. Mather, Winter Piety (Boston, 1712), pp. 23-4.

[3] C. Mather, A Monitor for Communicants (Boston, 1714), pp. 15-16.

[4] C. Mather, Winter Piety (Boston, 1712), p. 24.

[5] Leonard Trinterud, in The Forming of an American Tradition (Philadelphia, 1949), p. 181, notes the same modified Stoddardanism in the Log College men during the Great Awakening. John Wesley moved beyond this to a fully Stoddardean position; vide I. Morgan, The Nonconformity of Richard Baxter (London, 1946), p. 173.

For the regenerate, on the other hand, he utilizes the Supper as a lever to advance their sanctification through the demand for self-examination and increasing surrender of the life to the Holy Spirit. He found biblical justification for all of this in that favorite Puritan text, I Cor. 11:28: "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."

Having made his preparation, the communicant was to come to the Table ready to meditate on the significance of the elements, and also to think of "special designs of piety" during pauses,[1] or meditate on the weak spots in the armor of his sanctification.[2] A sample of such meditation given in the Diary begins with a consideration of the bread as symbolizing the self-giving of Christ, and continues with a thorough allegorical self-application of the crucifixion interpreted as a symbol of the mortification of personal sins.[3] Everything in the sacrament thus became, through the machinery of meditation, grist for the mills of sanctification.

The Lord's Supper, as presented in the central Pauline text in First Corinthians, is an immensely complex instrument which does include an element of challenge to personal, individual spiritual growth. It is also, however, a declaration of grace in justification, and a promise of grace in the outworking of the unio Christi in the life of the believer and the church. While it serves as a regular and constant stimulus to spiritual growth, it is primarily an objective act that draws the attention to the Giver and His Gift -- it is not intended to turn the partaker's attention inward. Mather's concentration on preparation and improvement in the sacrament, however, in combination with the theory of regeneration we have already handled, made it inevitable that great numbers of the congregation would develop scruples and abstain from the sacrament. Another effect of this treatment of the sacrament was to accentuate the atomic individualism which Puritanism retained as a heritage of monastic perfectionism. There is no mention in any of Mather's writings on the Supper of the corporate inclusion of all believers in the body of Christ, symbolized in their joint participation in the sacrament. In his celebration of the sacrament, believers do not so much eat together as a body; rather, each concentrates his attention wholly Godward in spiritual self-concern, as if the members were isolated points on a wheel's hub connected to the center by spokes.

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[1] C. Mather, A Monitor for Communicants (Boston, 1714), p. 12.

[2] C. Mather, Pastoral Desires (Boston, 1712), pp. 57-8. Wakefield, op. cit., p. 46, notes that this prescribing of devotional thoughts for the service is a holdover from Medieval practice.

[3] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 64-5 (June, 1683).

Mather deals rather less frequently with the subject of baptism. Apart from the usual comments on the complexities of the 'New England Way' in the administration of this sacrament, most of his remarks point again, to its instrumental value.

> When the Candidates of the Sacraments come unto us, what Opportunities have we, not only to Instruct them fully in the Way of the Lord, but also to go through a process of Repentance with them, and obtain

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[1] Wakefield (op. cit., pp. 29-37), defends the Puritans against an entirely individualistic conception of piety. Yet it is true that like many of their ancestors in the Middle Ages, they are more conscious of the importance of the growth of the cells in the corporate church than of their function within the body. Donald Rhoades, in an otherwise unsympathetic and unsatisfactory examination of the last and greatest Puritan ("Jonathan Edwards: Experimental Theologian" [unpublished doctoral dissertation, Yale University, 1945], p. 149) has an excellent statement on Edwards' Augustinian piety which sums up this weakness in the Puritan tradition: "Edwards' theological universe consisted essentially of God and 'my' soul. And so did every other man's theological universe, as Edwards meditated upon it. 'Our' had very little place in his speculative thought. Not human relationships at their highest, but the apprehensions and self-analysis of solitude, were his keys to reality."

> their *explicit Consent* unto every thing that may settle good *Terms with Heaven* with them? When the *Baptism* of the Lord is to be administered, what *Opportunities* have we to strike the Minds of the People with a *Revived Awe* of their *Baptismal Vows*, and revive to them the *Bonds of the Covenant* which their *Baptism* has left upon them! An Institution thus *improved* would soon be less *disputed*.[1]

The principal 'improvement' of the sacrament to which Mather urges his hearers is predictably in the testing and assuring of their own regeneracy. In the case of those who are already assured Mather recommends other improvements of the sacrament which are surprising in a Puritan context. Writing of the early fathers, he says, "And, Oh! how awful, how useful to them, was the Remembrance of their *Baptism* all their Days! If after their *Baptism*, they were Tempted unto any *known Sin*, they would Reply, *No, I have been Baptised, and I durse not pollute myself by Sinning after* it."[2] Mather does not remark upon the shallow definition of sin here. Another argument is as surprising in Mather's mouth as it was in Luther's:

> Those *Temptations* which are peculiarly called, *The Fiery darts of Satan*: Why should we not bring our *Baptism* to quench those *Fiery darts* . . . by thus arguing, *Baptisata Sum*, -- Am *I not Baptised*? *God has in that my Baptism, assured me, that He will wash me from all my Sins, and receive me to his Favour, if I return unto Him*. And thus, if we are hurried at any time to question the *Truth* of the *Christian Faith*; it is a rare course, to have recourse unto our *Baptism*; and argue so: Is there not a *God*! Yes, I was *Baptised* for Him. Is there not a Christ! Yes, I was *Baptised* into His Name. Is there not a *Future State* of *Glory* for the Righteous? Yes, I was *Baptised* into the Belief of it. I can tell you, that *Satan* will not be able to stand before such *Thoughts* as these; And *Sanctity* will be advanced by such Thoughts unto Astonishment![3]

While certain New England Puritans did hold to baptismal regeneration, and the whole Covenant theology and the conception of New England as Israel tended to move toward this direction,[4] Mather will not allow of any certainty of assurance on this ground, as we have seen above. His occasional willingness to use Baptism as a comforting reminder of God's grace is therefore an inconsistent Medieval remnant, ill-suited to the base of his theology. But these occasions are rare: the main significance of Baptism for Mather is that it is "a great engine which when rightly improved can bring holiness."[1]

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[1] C. Mather, *The Minister* (Boston, 1722), p. 34.

[2] C. Mather, *The Good Old Way* (Boston, 1706), p. 90.

[3] C. Mather, *A Tree Planted by the Rivers of Water* (Boston, 1704), p. 46.

[4] Norman Pettit, *The Heart Prepared* (New Haven, 1966), p. 123.

7. Miscellaneous Devotional Gadgetry

Besides the principal means of grace, Mather was drawn to a bewildering profusion of lesser instruments for the development of spirituality, most of these of Medieval or Patristic derivation. One of these, the regular practice of introspection, has already been viewed as a component in meditation and in preparation for communion; but it is so important and so ubiquitous in Mather's methodology that we should consider it separately as a devotional method. Mather again appeals to early Patristic piety for a warrant for the practice: "SELF-EXAMINATION is a Duty in the Christian Asceticks, than which there is none of greater Consequence."[2] He employs it, however, in forms which were distinctly Puritan evolutionary products, the spiritual diary and the use of manuals of self-examination. Irvonwy Morgan suggests that the development of the use of diaries for self-examination in the earliest Puritan leaders, such as Rogers and Perkins, was a methodological substitute for the Catholic confessional,[3] and there is some truth in this; but much of the effort poured into the diaries was directed toward the detection of the marks of regeneracy rather than the nurture of sanctification. This is the sense in which Increase Mather understood the work of self-examination.[1] Mather's 'manual for self-examination,' The Tryed Professor, (1719), is one of those instruments for the detection of hypocrisy and common-grace spirituality of which Daniel Dykes' Mystery of Self-Deceiving (1614) was the progenitor,[2] and Edwards' Treatise on the Affections the apotheosis. Here Mather advises his readers to prize a ministry which searches them out and take time besides to search themselves for such dangerous signs of unregeneracy as regular indulgence in known sin, allergy to secret prayer and exceptional holiness in others, habitual unfairness in business, and fanatical religious zeal. He urges the examiner to penetrate behind the common-grace virtues in his life until he reaches the 'things that accompany salvation.'[3]

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[1] C. Mather, Baptistes (Boston, 1705), p. 15.

[2] C. Mather, A Soul Well Anchored (Boston, 1712), p. 10.

[3] I. Morgan, The Godly Preachers of the Elizabethan Church (London, 1965), p. 170.

On the other hand, such introspection could be productive of sanctification even when it was undertaken in the quest for assurance. And the diary records do give us evidence that the method was often used with only sanctification in view. Mather notes that "tho' I live in the very frequent Practice of Self-Examination, yett I have so rarely recorded the Method and Result of that Exercise;"[4] but he does record a sample evening self-examination from early in his life:

I have methodized my nocturnal Recollections. Quaestions for the

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[1] C. Mather, Parentator (Boston, 1724), p. 12.

[2] F. E. Stoeffler, The Rise of Evangelical Pietism (Leiden, 1965), p. 74.

[3] C. Mather, The Tryed Professor (Boston, 1719), passim.

[4] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 510 (March, 1704/5).

Evening.

I. What hath been Gods Providence towards myself in the . . . Day?

II. What hath been my Behaviour towards God? . . .

  1. Have I lived . . . under a deep Sense of *Mortalitie* and *Eternitie*; and as a *Stranger in the World*?
  2. Have I devoutly read the *Word* of God . . . and seriously sought the *Face* of God; both in my *Retirement*, and with the *Family*?
  3. Have I had many *Ejaculations* this Day? . . .
  4. Have I had most affectionate *Meditations* upon *heavenly Things* this Day; and have I made *earthly Things* to occasion some of my profitable *Reflections*?
  5. Have I been careful of my *Discourse* this day . . .?
  6. Have I been diligent in my *Calling* this Day; and avoided all needless Expence of my precious and golden Minutes in *Diversions*?
  7. Have I this Day endeavoured all *Usefulness*, unto those to whom I am *related*, or with whom I have been *concerned*?
  8. Have I this Day controlled and conquered my *Master Sin*; and has my Watchfulness issued in my Victory over my own *Iniquitie*?

III. Am I in a fitt *State* and *Frame*, to *dy* this Night?[1]

This is the self-examination of one who is assured on his own Christianity and seeking for modes of growth, or at least trying to root out weeds in the life. It contains some goals which are native to the deepest strain of classical Christian piety, but it is curiously concerned with *methods* rather than with the concrete problems of the spiritual life to be overcome.

Two other devotional techniques which Mather mentions from time to time are *vows* and *acts* or *intentions of piety*. The latter, which Mather is very fond of, he began to practice at the age of 18, resolving in the New Year

> . . . to act as much as may bee, for God, in every Action. And therefore Before I study, or preach, or hear, a *Sermon*; Before I make a *Visit*; Before I eat a *Meal*; Before I sett upon any *Recreation*; Before I fall asleep at *Night*; I would still have distinct Thoughts, *lett mee now* do this (or, *I will do this*) *for God*. The Lord having *taught* mee thus to fall into the Way of declared and explicit *Acting* for Him, tis incredible what a *new Life* of Soul, I did thereby Experience.

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[1] *Ibid*., 73-5 (September, 1683).

> My Soul was from this Time raised into an high, a sweet, an heavenly Way of Living; I something felt the Meaning of dwelling in God, tho' no Books or Men on Earth had ever instructed mee how to do it. The Thoughts of being for God, continually, and of expressly interesting the great God, in all my Motions, exceedingly ravished mee . . . . And thus, while I was yett a Child, I fell into some singular Methods, of doing those things, which might render mee in Time, a Man of God.[1]

His recommendations of the practice in sermons are frequent and uniform over the whole period of his ministry.[2] In several cases he almost seems to define the process of sanctification as a continual engaging in intentions of piety, "Those Thoughts, with which the Life of God is to be carried on":[3] "The Holy Dr. Usher being desired to write about Sanctification, with Tears lamenting the defect of it in himself, gave this Description of it, -- It is for a Man to be in the offering up of his Soul continually, in the flames of Love, as a whole burnt-offering to God in Jesus Christ."[4] Thus, although Mather claims to have discovered this method uninfluenced by his tradition, the basic elements of it were not unknown to English Puritan piety. The flavor of this practice is, of course, much more redolent of the Catholic piety of the Counter-reformation, and specifically the vigorous emphasis on the will of Ignatius Loyola.

Another exercise involving the will which Mather mentions occasionally is the practice of making vows. His discussion indicates that this was at least a live option for seventeenth century Puritans, but he is on the whole dubious about this method, as inconsistent with the Reformation theology of grace and with biblical law: "We must beware how we come into Ill Terms with the Third Commandment by rushing suddenly upon every Vow that in a pang we have a Fancy for. The want of this Caution, Oh, What Bloody Work, has it made upon the Ensnared Souls of men!"[1]

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[1] Ibid., 37 (October, 1681).

[2] Cf. C. Mather, Several Sermons Concerning Walking with God (Boston, 1689), p. 9. The High Attainment (Boston, 1703), p. 26; The Christian Temple (Boston, 1706), p. 25; Malachi (Boston, 1717), p. 13; Signatus (Boston, 1727), p. 38.

[3] Ibid., II (New York, 1957), 335 (February, 1715/16).

[4] C. Mather, Several Sermons Concerning Walking with God (Boston, 1689), p. 9.

Among other minor means of edification to which Mather briefly alludes are 'religious conference' -- conversation with friends on spiritual subjects -- and the reading on devotional literature. Even friendship was methodized for Mather -- the title of his tract on religious conference, The Rules of a Visit (1705), is indicative. Mather himself was in every conversation aiming to steer the subject to something edifying, and he recommends the same strategy to his people. His manual on how to visit profitably states that the primary aim should always be kept in mind: to contradict atheism in bad times, and "Encourage one another in the wayes of Deserted, Despised, Derided Godliness."[2] At the least, the aim should be to avoid subjects of conversation which are spiritually harmful to oneself or others; at best, there is to be a striving toward that which is spiritually edifying. Not that religion alone is to be spoken of -- Mather himself is a little horrified by that thought -- but there is to be a sober preparation of head and heart for whatever the discourse is, an ecomony in speaking, an avoiding of the speculative or disputatious, and an attempt to do some spiritual good in the company before leaving. At times a religious question can be asked to turn the conversation in a 'profitable' direction. But Mather is concerned not to propagate an unnatural religiosity:

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[1] C. Mather, A Man of His Word (Boston, 1713), p. 11-12.

[2] C. Mather, The Rules of a Visit (Boston, 1705), p. 7.

> It is necessary that we seek to be first of all Qualified, with some *Understanding* of *Religion*, some *Affection* to *Religion*, some *Experience* in it. *Religious Conferences*, O let them not be *Ostentatious Formalities*. To *Speak* much, and *Know* little; to *Speak* much, and *Feel* nothing; I am not advising to *That* . . . But then, As *Hypocrisy* is to be avoided, so, Secondly; Must *Loquacity* . . .[1]

Mather is not against an admixture of humor in conversations:

> An *Innocent Pleasancy* may sometimes be humored in our Visits. You remember, that I said, *Innocent*. I meant an Intercourse of *Doves*, not an Intercourse of *Serpents*. Our *Wit* may be *Serviceably* produced and sharpened in our *Visits*. We may very *Serviceably* bring in *Sauce* as well as *Meat*, unto them whom we are Entertaining. Only then, It must not be *All* nothing but *Sauce*; and we must beware lest it go so far as to leave a Tincture of *Carnality* on our minds.[2]

It is clear that Mather is describing here his own habitual practice, as it is reported to us by his colleagues; and if even a Franklin was charmed by his discourse, this method may not have been entirely without success as he managed it.

In both the Puritan and Pietist developments of Protestant Christian experience there was a profuse development of *Erbauungsliteratur* during the Seventeenth Century, and Mather heartily recommends that the chinks in his people's spiritual armor (and in their schedules) be filled in with the reading of such works. In *Honesta Parsimonia*, which might be described as a tract on how to become a miser with time, Mather notes that one way surplus spare time can be filled up is by the use of such literature.[4] Mather's own colossal literary production is attributable not only to his drive for recognition but to his concern to flood New England households with such products. He even advises himself to read his own books!

There is nothing of so much Concernment for me, as to take effectual

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 35.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 30.

[3] Stoeffler, *op*. *cit*., p. 18.

[4] C. Mather, *Honesta Parsimonia* (Boston, 1721). p. 23.

> Care, that my own Books, do not at last prove my own Condemenation, by my failing in those Points of Piety, which I commend unto others. Wherefore, (with Prayers to be delivered from so great a Confusion) I would, on the Lord's Day Evenings read over my own Books of Piety, and work them over again upon my Heart; that my Soul may be exquisitely conformed unto them.[1]

But he is equally interested in recommending the whole store of Puritan writings to his people, and also the new productions of German Pietism:

> More than all Europe will soon feel, yea, has already felt, the precious Effects of the Franckian education . . . There the Printing Presses have brought forth Books, which have had an Incredible Efficacy for the Producing of Piety, even in far distant Counties.[2]

8. Summary Comment: Mather's Treatment of the Means of Grace

Looked at from the worst possible perspective, Mather's lifelong fascination with the machinery for supporting the spiritual life hints at a rather fragile, hothouse quality in his own spirituality. The gardener who is preoccupied with fertilizers and trellises may be laboring with a sick rose. Luther's epithet applied to the Anabaptists, Novus Monachismus, is at times appropriate for Mather's Puritanism. As the monastic and anchoritic heroes of his Patristic sources found themselves separated from the world by their walls and their deserts, some of them became detached from Christ's mission and immobilized within the sphere of their own sanctified egocentricity, learning to preoccupy their time with the busy-work of the soul, continually taking the temperature of their emotional lives and searching for the once-known atmosphere of the Spirit given in the missionary context of Pentecost. Seeking for spiritual power as an end in itself rather than as an auxiliary to mission, they short-circuited its presence in their lives and found as a substitute the elaboration of devotional machinery. This may partially have been the case with Mather also. The Log-College man would wonder where he got the time for so much cultivation of his own spirit in the midst of a parish of so many souls; and it is probable that most of these souls were not helped, but only intimidated, by the Jacob's ladder of methodology through which Mather sought to bring down spiritual gifts from Heaven.

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[1] C. Mather, Diary, II (New York, 1957), 28 (February, 1709-10).

[2] C. Mather, Nuncia Bona e Terra Longinqua (Boston, 1715), p. 7.

But too often, with Mather, the ladder was reversed; unlike Jacob's, in which angels descended with grace from the Throne, Mather's had to be climbed by the recipient. Paul puts the contrast clearly:

> Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on the law shall live by it. But the righteousness based on faith says, Do not say in your heart, "Who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach.)[1]

Mather's "Tears, Fasts, and Macerating Devotions and Reservations" suggest another Pauline critique of legalism:

> If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the universe, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world? Why do you submit to regulations . . . These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting rigor of devotion and self-abasement and severity to the body, but they are of no value in checking the indulgence of the flesh.[2]

Presented not as a counsel of perfection but as normative Christian godliness, the Puritan devotional machinery must have seemed to many New Englanders not an aid to natural spiritual growth, but "a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear."[3]

We have already commented on the instrumentalization of piety in Mather, in which the object of pious interest and concern is not so much God's grace pro nobis, but instead the different methods of obtaining spiritual graces in nobis, and godliness is almost defined as a system of methods, rather than method being an aid to the attainment of organic spiritual growth. The effect of such instrumentalization is often to obscure what should be the object of piety, relationship with God, in fixing the attention upon the manipulation of the channels of grace. There are occasions when it even diverts attention from the real and deep spiritual needs in the individual, as he becomes fascinated with the whirring machinery of pious acts he has constructed. What results is a secularization of piety, in which the spiritual life, which should be centered on God's will and his mission, is structured in an orbit revolving around the self. The goal of the pious individual becomes spiritual self-aggrandizement, the polishing of an image of devotional heroism, with God really regarded more or less as a kind of celestial Parts Department which can supply us with the elements of a renewed nature, so that we may construct ourselves as idols.

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[1] Romans 10:5-8 (RSV).

[2] Colossians 2:20-3 (RSV).

[3] Acts 15:10 (RSV).

The goal of New Testament spirituality might be described as an obedient faith -- a condition in which we have sufficiently grasped the fact that 'we are accepted,' through the justifying work of Christ, so that we can face the depths of disorder and disobedience in our personalities, and begin to subject these to God's order; or, to reverse this sequence, a condition in which we have been enlightened to see the inwardness and subtlety of sin in our lives, so intensely that we can only turn to a justification which comes through faith, and not by those works of righteousness which are clearly impossible, and yet are driven by conviction to reorient our lives around God instead of self. We may evaluate any usage of the 'means of grace' by the extent to which it nurtures this kind of obedient faith. Thus it is obvious that "Christian Asceticks" may involve themselves in practices which because of their very intensity and extensiveness are an expression of unbelief rather than of faith, which are exhibits of devotional hypertrophy, in which the soul is constructing a fictitious 'godliness' which inhibits faith rather than building it up. An obvious example is the case of prayer. The author of Ecclesiastes states the need for continence in prayer, if that prayer is really to be an expression of faith, rather than a mechanical barrage of words to bend the divine will to human purposes:

> Guard your steps when you do to the house of God; to draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know that they are doing evil. Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven, and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few. For a dream comes with much business, and a fool's voice with many words.[1]

Here is a piety which recognize by faith the nature of the God it is addressing, and by this very faith is inhibited from inappropriate elaboration in prayer, which would merely display a stupid and incredulous human nature. The same point is made by Jesus in the famous passage in which he cautions against heaping of "empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."[2] We can therefore discern in some of the 'long prayers' of Cotton Mather a strange denial of simple trust in the divine will, a conviction that the reception of the Spirit must be won "by works of the law" rather than "by hearing with faith,"[3] failure simply to submit to the absolute sovereignty of God which has already discerned human need and willed its fulfilment. In the same way the Puritan Sabbath could turn a celebration of divine grace into a treadmill of agonizing spiritual labor, short-circuiting the very virtues it was seeking to build.

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[1] Ecclesiastes 5:1-3 (RSV).

[2] Matthew 6:7, 8 (RSV).

[3] Galatians 3:2, 5 (RSV).

On the other hand, we are dealing here, as in the case of the justification/sanctification complex we encountered in studying regeneration, with a paradoxical tension in which both sides must be maintained to preserve the biblical balance. There can be a species of spiritual slovenliness which rests itself in a mythical 'trust in God's sovereignty,' and thereby excuses itself from doing anything which would express a genuine and living faith and nurture it through "rekindling the gift of God which is in us."[1] It is superfluous to say that we are more in danger of this aberration today than the contrasting denial of faith which is asceticism. Therefore Jesus and the New Testament writers present a piety which does not relax itself into a swoon simply because it recognizes that holiness is built through the growth of faith rather than the effort of human flesh. James puts it most clearly, of course: "Faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead"; "Faith apart from works is barren."[2] But a certain kind of vigorous asceticism is woven into the whole fabric of the New Testament, e.g. in Paul's counsel to "keep under the body, and bring it into subjection,"[3] and in his paradoxical exhortation to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."[4] The author of Hebrews indicates that a genuine faith in God will be moved to search for him, that "whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."[1]

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[1] II Timothy 1:6 (RSV).

[2] James 2:17, 20 (RSV).

[3] I Corinthians 9:27 (RSV).

[4] Philippians 2:12, 13 (RSV).

Biblically speaking, the goal of all religious methodology should be either to strengthen or to express faith, which is the core of the spiritual life, and to enhance mission. There are obvious areas where Mather's involved methodism was an expression of a lack of faith and genuine communion with God rather than a means of enriching these. There are other regions in which his methods actually interfered with his mission as a pastor, by occupying time and thought that should have been devoted to others rather than to himself. On the other hand, the great monastic and contemplative geniuses of the Western Christian tradition testify with one voice that authentic communion with God, received through believing and diligent use of the means of grace, issues in dynamic action which enriches other men and society itself. Considering the productive activism of Mather, which we shall examine shortly, we must conclude that this thesis is as true for him as it is for Teresa of Avila, or Francke, or John Wesley. With our modern (or perhaps merely human) tendency to plunge into activism while leaving our relationship with God to take care of itself, to neglect the means of interior grace and even to doubt the reality of the renewed life, we need a corrective in Mather's direction.

CHAPTER V

SANCTIFICATION: THE DEVELOPMENT OF PIETY

1. The 'Power of Godliness': Mather's Concept of Normative Spiritual Health

The means of grace, employed in the process of sanctification, are designed to lead the Christian into a state of growing spiritual wholeness. Before studying Mather's handling of sanctification, we need to fix our attention on the goal of this process, the norm of spiritual health which the Puritans defined as "the power of godliness."

Appraising Mather's spirituality after examining his extensive methodology, we might be tempted to summarize it by the phrase, 'Reformed orthodox asceticism': a form of Christianity in which Medieval and Patristic devotional exercises have been imposed on a framework of Protestant scholasticism. This characterization furnishes an easy explanation for the intermittent periods of decline in the Puritan experiential tradition, since it posits a built-in katabolism in the movement which is bound to erode its vigor periodically, whenever its orthodoxy poisons its mystical vitality. Miller and Trinterud both adopt this theory, and it is also the heart of a suggestive thesis by Herbert Perluck, in which it is asserted that American Puritanism ultimately withered because, unlike Calvin, it did not have an existential and personal definition of faith, but settled instead for a noetic and conceptual definition with the _testimonium spiriti sancti_ 'added' as an afterthought.[1]

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[1] H. A. Perluck, "Puritan Expression and the Decline of Piety" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Brown University, 1955), pp. 84, 88, 92, 95, 108, 121.

Although this theory is stimulating and momentarily persuasive, it ignores the difference between the goals of Protestant experientialism and those of mere confessional orthodoxy. The contrast is clearly visible in the intense conflict generated by the Lutheran Pietist awakening, in which the orthodox theologians bitterly attacked Spener and Francke because of their efforts to make biblical truth subjectively real to the common laity, while the Pietists in turn reacted with accusations of deadness and Pharisaism toward those who differed only minutely from them in conceptual doctrine. While the Puritans of Mather's generation had no dead orthodoxy to contend with other than that embodied in their own laity, and so spent their polemic energies against various forms of heterodoxy, by the time the Great Awakening reached America in the Middle Colonies, Freylinghausen and the Tennants had to contend equally against Enlightenment erosion and orthodox brethren who did not care to be sanctified quite to the degree or in the manner prescribed by the Log College men.[1] The Puritanism which fired the Awakening in this country was, as we have said, neither orthodoxy nor rationalism, nor was it a compromise; it was a _tertium quid_.

And yet, doctrinally, Puritan Pietism has an orthodox bone-structure.[2] How, then, did the spiritual goals of orthodoxy and Puritanism differ? Scholastic orthodoxy, both in Reformed and Lutheran circles, would have called a man spiritually healthy if his thinking were conceptually sound and biblical (or perhaps confessional!) on the main point of justification and a great number of lesser ones, while his will was fixed in some fairly consistent pattern of Christian morality, and his emotions experiencing a combination of gratitude and the sense of dependence. Most Puritans would characterize this level of piety as at best minimal, and quite possibly an unregenerate state tempered by common grace.

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[1] L. Trinterud, _The Forming of an American Tradition_ (Philadelphia, 1949), pp. 176, 180.

[2] Thus the Log College men sought both for experiential examination of candidates and for subscription to the Westminster standards; cf. Trinterud, _op. cit._, pp. 62, 66, 170.

The Puritan standard of piety and spiritual health differed in two respects: it was more existentially focussed -- it demanded a constant and pervasive practical reformation of a man's life -- and it had a pneumatic element, a dimension of spiritual and supernatural vitality, which lifted it out of the flat plane of the orthodox faculty psychology. Puritanism insisted that the spiritual life was distinctly supernatural, both in origin and in conscious experience. The individual saint was to be aware of exchanges between his own life and that of the risen Christ, of communications and operations of the Spirit within the moving tides of his mental and motivational life. Thus, 'devotion' or 'piety,' for the Puritan, was not a sort of incidental frosting of emotional warmth, which might be lathered over the thinking and willing of an individual, as it seemed to the orthodox. 'Emotions,' for the Puritans, were merely epiphenomena. The important thing was the existential condition of the whole life -- the grounding of mind, will, and feeling (and behind these, the heart, the central wellspring of consciousness) in a participation of the life of God. This supernatural enlivening was not merely an added enthusiasm, so that a healthy Puritanism would be defined simply as an energetic orthodoxy; it was a quality which not only motivated but also transformed and redirected thought and action, so that the mind actually thought differently using 'the same truths.' The Puritans complained in their diaries of "a dead frame of spirit," even at times when the mind and will were straining to serve God; for "the power of godliness" which they sought could only be produced by the presence and control of the Spirit.[1]

The precedence of 'live orthodoxy' over 'mere orthodoxy,' and even over ascetic method, is clearly stated in Mather:

> What is true Holiness? Many mistakes have there been about that glorious thing: a man may be Orthodox in his Perswasions, and yet not be Holy: A Man may be very austere and severe in his Practices, and yet not be Holy: You may say of a Man, That he has a Righteousness equal to that of the Scribes and Pharisees, and yet the Man may be a stranger to true Holiness after all. O, but when once it can be said of a Man, He walks with God! then, then Holiness is to be seen upon him.[2]

Here true holiness is not defined merely as a spiritually energized orthodoxy or orthopraxy. It is delineated as taking place in a context of personal confrontation with God and practical obedience to Him. In another sermon on III John 4 ("I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (KJV), he places a very rich, Johannine and non-propositional content upon the word _truth_:

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[1] Bronkema's analysis of what is 'wrong' with Puritan piety is a revealing commentary on the difference between Puritanism and real scholastic Reformed orthodoxy: "Perkins' one aim in all his writings was to edify . . . All that he wrote was governed by the desire to advance the inner godly life . . . This attitude is of course not conducive to a logical system of theology . . . The reason Puritanism could unite with so many and such varied systems lies in the Puritan Biblicism, in its tendency to neglect the intellectual, the systematic, and to emphasize the voluntaristic and practical." Rejecting Ames' definition of faith, "a resting of the heart in God," as too subjective and anti-dogmatic, Bronkema prefers the definitions of Polanus (res ipsae credendae) and Voetius (fiducia in Deum de ipsius beneficiis erga suam Ecclesiam). Vide R. Bronkema, The Essence of Puritanism (Goes, 1929), pp. 87-9, 94, 100-1. From another perspective, Brunner clearly differentiates the Puritan/Pietist approach from that of scholastic orthodoxy, and vindicates its basic 'existentialism,' though he intends to go beyond its limitations: "It is precisely we -- the group of 'dialectic' theologians . . . who have every reason to remember Pietism with the highest gratitude. For the best which we had when we started we were indebted, humanly speaking, to two great figures of Pietism, Chr. Blumhardt in Boll and Kierkegaard, the man who, likewise in conflict against a false Objectivism, ventured the daring sentence: Subjectivity is truth. But it is not and should not be for nothing that we also saw clearly the dubious aspects of Pietism, just this Subjectivism; hence our watchword can be none other than, 'Beyond Orthodoxy and Pietism, Biblical faith!" (Emil Brunner, The Divine-Human Encounter, tr. by A. W. Loos (Philadelphia, 1943), p. 39.)

[2] C. Mather, Several Sermons Concerning Walking with God (Boston, 1689), p. 8.

> To _Walk in Truth_, is to Lead such a Life, as we must and shall, when the _Truth_ has a _Lively Power_ upon us . . . To _Walk in Truth_, is to Walk under a Powerful Impression and Efficacy of the _Truth_ . . . To _Walk_ in _Truth_, is, to _Love this JESUS_, and _Receive Him_, and put ourselves under His _Conduct_, in all our _Walk_.
>
> . . . .
>
> To _Walk_ in _Truth_, is to Walk in _CHRIST_; in Conversation with a Glorious _Christ_, in Conformity to a Glorious _CHRIST_, in the Methods of the brightest and most Vital Christianity. Our blessed _JESUS_ has told us, John 14:6, _I am the truth_. So that, To Walk in Him, is to _Walk in the Truth_.[1]

2. _The Function of Truth in Sanctification_

On the other hand, Mather is convinced of the necessity of a kind of orthodoxy, and his concept of sanctification makes extensive use of propositional truth. This truth, however, must be extracted from the text of scripture, so that Mather, like the German Pietists but perhaps to a lesser degree, advocates a Bible-orthodoxy rather than a Dogma-orthodoxy, as Brunner would say.[2] He regards biblical doctrine as the backbone of genuine piety for two reasons.

First, he is convinced that biblically orthodox thinking is a touchstone of authentic spirituality. If the Spirit of truth has done any work of grace in men's hearts, if their inward set of will is toward God, they will gravitate toward correct intellectual expressions of biblical truth and finally anchor upon these.

> The more of _Godliness_ there is in any Man, the more is the _Christian Religion without Controversy_ to him . . . The more _Vertuously_ any

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[1] C. Mather, _The Wayes and Joyes of Early Piety_ (Boston, 1712), pp. 9-11, 13.

[2] E. Brunner, _op. cit._, p. 153.

> man is Inclined, he is prepared the more to Embrace the Christian Religion. And, if a Man have a Real Work of Grace in him, the Christian Religion is become Exceedingly agreable to him. Yea, A Work of Grace brings a Man Experimentally to feel the Main Truths which the Christian Religion is composed of.[1]

On the other hand, the converse is also true: an ungracious disposition of heart is at the root of departures from biblical faith, for "Vice does beget Infidelity."[2]

> The grand cause of all errors lies in wickedness . . . 'Tis a prejudice against Holiness which makes People forego the Truth.[3]
>
> That which renders a Deist, or any other, averse to the Christian Religion, is nothing but some Filthy and Beastly Lust, acted by the Devil . . . They are lothe to Practise that which is Good; This, This tis, that makes 'em lothe to Believe that which is True.[4]

Mather does however allow that a dead orthodoxy, in which biblical concepts held in the mind may be short-circuited by a vicious will and a Spiritless frame of heart, will also lead inevitably to ultimate heresy: "People hold the Truth in Unrighteousness; They do not join Practice with their Knowledge; Were the Truth more Practiced, it would be less Disputed . . . This provokes the Justice of Heaven, to give them up unto Strong Delusions . . . Light without Flame is the Scandal of our Reformation, the Ruin of all Religion."[5] All of this is simply a commentary on a Johannine text: "For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does what is true comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds hav been wrought in God."[1] Mather would be quite ready to acknowledge that the primary meaning of this statement is that those whose hearts are prepared by the Spirit will come to Christ himself, who is the light; but he would insist that there is a kind of aura of illuminated propositional truth surrounding the person of Christ and embodied in biblical revelation, into which the mind of those whose hearts are right will deeply penetrate, and in which their thoughts will habitually move. For the Puritans, normative spiritual health included the sanctification of the mind, its transformation and control by the Spirit so that it could think biblically, not with the grinding logic of mere mental orthodoxy, but with the live spontaneity of the biblical writers themselves, rooted in their thought but constantly flowering in new directions consistent with the apostolic witness.

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[1] C. Mather, Christianity Demonstrated (Boston, 1710), p. 22.

[2] C. Mather, Reason Satisfied (Boston, 1712), p. 27.

[3] C. Mather, The Man of God Furnished (Boston, 1708), p. 52.

[4] C. Mather, Christianity Demonstrated (Boston, 1710), p. 22.

[5] C. Mather, The Man of God Furnished (Boston, 1708), pp. 52-3.

In the second place, biblical orthodoxy was important for Mather because, in the Puritan view, the progress of the whole personality in holiness was basically dependent on the entrance of truth into the mind: "You can't come to Goodness without Knowledge . . . For tis by giving us the knowledge of Salvation, that God brings us to it."[2] Although Mather allows that sanctifying grace can enter the souls of irrational infants in the covenant without an accompanying understanding of the gospel, in the normal course of this world, truth is in order to godliness:

> Indeed, Knowledge is the first Thing that is necessary in order to Salvation; And it is Absolutely Necessary, Unspeakably Necessary . . . Tis the Gospel of Salvation; They that are Ignorant of it, must need miss of Salvation. 'Tis an Erroneous and Pernicious Principle, That a Man may be Saved in any Religion if he do but

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[1] John 3:20, 21 (RSV).

[2] C. Mather, Pastoral Desires (Boston, 1712), pp. 5-6.

> Live *according to it*. The Unerring and infallible Gospel has Expressly told us otherwise, in II Cor. 4:3; But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. We have not the least intimation in the book of God, that an unknown Savior will be ours.[1]

So essential is propositional knowledge for the regeneration of adults that ungospellized nations must perish eternally, since "the *Sun of Righteousness* visits them not . . . they are *destroyed for the lack of the knowledge* of the only Savior."[2] What is here applied only to regeneration, Mather holds as true across the whole spectrum of sanctification. While it is Christ, through his Spirit, who alone can infuse spiritual life by an independent "Vital Work" in the soul, yet he also uses propositional truth as an instrument to precipitate conscious conversion, through a "Moral Work."

> It is the Good Pleasure of God, that the *Moral Work* of the *Spirit*, should accompany the *Vital Work* . . . and . . . that in the *Moral Work* . . . the *Gospel* should be His *Instrument*. So, for the Dividing of the Red-Sea, *Moses's* Rod must be lifted up. If the Souls of Sinners are *Dead*, unto what purpose is it then to *Prophesy* over them? It seems a very odd Thing to Address the *Dead* . . . Yet the *Gospel* of the Lord *JESUS CHRIST* is . . . the *Vehicle*, in which the Holy *Spirit* of God comes to *Life* unto them . . . There is indeed an *Aptness* in the Gospel, for this Excellent work . . . When the *Spirit* of God *Converts* us, He deals not with us, as with *Stocks* and *Stones*, that have no *Reason* in them. He deals with us as with *Men* . . . *Reasons* with us by His *Gospel* . . . Tis true, Tis not enough to Enlighten our *Understandings*: Our *Wills* must be Rectified, as well as our *Understanding* Enlightened. Yet the *Spirit* of God accomodates Himself to our *Nature*, when He brings us into a State of *Grace*.[3]

But just as correct propositional truth can be the instrument through which (or accompanying which) the Spirit brings life into the soul, lies, incorrect propositions about God, can be an instrument of destruction when the mind and will do not resist these: "Haeresies may be such, as to Extinguish the Life of GOD in the Soul, and ruin the Dependence both on the SON of GOD, and on the SPIRIT of God, which must accompany Salvation."[1] So strong is Mather's connection of spiritual life and correct propositions about God that he can refer to homo-ousios as "a term which saved the life of the primitive churches."[2]

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[1] C. Mather, *The Greatest Concern in the World* (Boston, 1765 [1707]), pp. 5-6.

[2] C. Mather, *Utilia* (Boston, 1716), p. 36.

[3] C. Mather, *The Spirit of Life Entring into the Spiritually Dead* (Boston, 1707), pp. 15-16.

It is true, as Trinterud and others have pointed out, that much of the development in this attempt at 'live orthodoxy' rests partly on the dubious and shallow presuppositions of the faculty psychology common during the period.[3] On the other hand, Mather's practical handling of the relationship between truth and experience appeals constantly to biblical texts and never to supposed psychological systems. Trinterud is correct in observing that "The Federal theology as a system as based upon the view that man's reason or understanding was the point of contact for the Holy Spirit's regenerating influences."[4] It is false, however, to assume that Mather was governed and misled by an iron philosophical dogma that posited the primacy of the understanding and insisted that the will and affections could only be recaptured and set in order after the thinking had been set straight.[1] On the contrary, in the sections listed above, Mather simply assumes that the whole man must be made alive at once in the process of regeneration; and that in such an enlivening process God deals with men as rational, as well as volitional and emotional, creatures, and so addresses and enlivens the mind at the same time as He invigorates the other faculties. Mather and his tradition had to deal with a great many sections of the New Testament which connect the process of regeneration with the hearing of the preached kerygma. Consequently he had to allow some degree of instrumentality to truth in the rebirth of the human spirit, even if it were only the very indirect instrumentality which the analogy of Moses' rod suggests. It would have been definitely helpful to Mather if he had grasped something of the concept of the heart, the central wellspring of the personality of which all the conscious faculties are only tributaries, which is truer not only to our post-Freudian understanding of the role of the unconscious in the human psyche, but also to the biblical picture of man. Just as the Puritan stress on 'the affections' could be misread and lead subsequent followers into emotionalism, the almost unconscious use of terminology from the faculty psychology could lead to a very shallow and mechanical concept of sanctification. It was constantly subject to a breakdown into superficial legalism, as Trinterud suggests.[2]

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[1] C. Mather, Three Letters from New England (London, 1721), p. 11.

[2] Ibid., p. 20.

[3] L. J. Trinterud, The Forming of an American Tradition (Philadelphia, 1949), p. 187; cf. E. S. Morgan, The Puritan Family (Boston, 1944), pp. 46-51. E. S. Morgan considerably overstates the case when he claims that the whole Puritan system rests on the notion that every grace enters into the soul through the understanding. Nevertheless he is correct in stating that for the Puritan any devotion nurtured on ignorance was invalid (Morgan, The Puritan Family [Boston, 1944], p. 46). Raymond Stearns observes correctly that for the Puritans growth in faith and spiritual growth was "directly proportionate to the degree of education" (Stearns, The Strenuous Puritan [Urbana, 1954], p. 51). Yet these are hardly deductions from the faculty psychology; they rest on biblical grounds and are also almost empirically verifiable in pastoral experience.

[4] Trinterud, op. cit., p. 187.

On the other hand, it is at least questionable whether the inclusion of propositional truth as an agent in regeneration and sanctification is part of the problem here, as Perluck insists.[1] Most Puritans would heartily subscribe to the following statement:

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., pp. 192, 195.

> Faith, in other words, is in the final analysis not faith in something -- something true, a doctrine; it is not 'thinking something,' but personal encounter, trust, obedience, and love; but this personal happening is indissolubly linked with conceptual content, with truth in the general sense of the word, truth as doctrine, knowledge as perception of facts.[2]

They would be just as thoroughly puzzled by Brunner's intended attack on their tradition:

> Fundamentally Bible-Orthodoxy is precisely the same as dogma-Orthodoxy, involving the application of the general concept of truth to revelation, instead of surmounting this understanding of truth by means of revelation. Where this confusion once dominates the understanding of truth, all subsequent instruction that faith is not only holding something as true, but is 'also' trust and obedience is futile. It comes too late; the damage is already done: From being a fellowship of disciples the Church has become a school.[3]

Puritans like Mather would find the missile here somewhat wide of the mark, for this statement is a good description of a lifeless biblical orthodoxy, but it is not a fair summary of the kind of Spirit-illuminated, existential and yet propositional thinking that was for them the goal of the sanctified Christian mind. Brunner's personalistic model for the nature of revelation and its interaction with Christian experience can be a valuable counterbalance to orthodoxy, and it avoids the dangerous propensity to an unbiblical objectivism hidden in the philosophical roots of the Puritan model. But like any theological model, it has its own dangers if it is rigidly extrapolated. What it represents as anti-Hellenism would appear to the Puritans to be more plainly described as anti-intellectualism, or perhaps as an effort to empty the mind of biblical propositions which might leave it dangerously subject to extra-biblical intellectual systems. The Puritan reasoned that God had given us minds capable of propositional thought; that He had revealed Himself in propositional statements as well as persons and acts, while cautioning that none of these could be grasped and interpreted without the Holy Spirit's mind-transforming illumination; and that a developed saint would think biblically, moving in the same universe of discourse as the apostolic witness, as well as living with biblical vigor. In our gratitude for the recapturing of the personal dimension of faith in the neo-Reformation theology of this century, we should not overlook the fact that the Reformers themselves, and most of the leading figures in the experiential traditions of Western Christendom, have insisted on some element of propositional truth to counter-balance the dangers of theological subjectivism inherent in a total denial of propositional revelation. Each of them has had some equivalent for the Puritan balance between the Spirit and the Word. It should therefore surprise us considerably less than it does, to find that in orthodox Puritans -- and even seventeenth century Reformed orthodox scholastics -- there is a lot more life than we have been led to suspect.[1]

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[1] H. A. Perluck, "Puritan Expression and the Decline of Piety" (unpublished doctoral thesis, Brown University, 1955), pp. 84, 95.

[2] Emil Brunner, The Divine-Human Encounter, tr. by A. W. Loos Philadelphia, 1943), p. 112 (italics mine).

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 153.

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[1] The tension here between propositional and trans-propositional forms of faith and experience -- exemplified biblically in the contrast between I Cor. 2:13 and I Cor. 13: 8-12 -- is embodied in Protestant history by the conflict between the Reformers and the Anabaptists, and the later tension between Puritans and Enthusiasts. Within the Roman Catholic tradition, there has been a recurrent questioning of the transintellectual mystical tradition adapted from Plotinus by the pseudo-Dionysius. Pourrat questions whether direct knowledge of God is attainable on earth in by-passing the mind and senses, and notes that post-Medieval scholastics asked the mystics how they could know they were in contact with the real God without some propositional functioning of the mind. (Pourrat, op. cit., I (London,

3. Mortification/Vivification

Theologians of Christian experience have generally agreed that in the process of spiritual growth, new life must inevitably come from death. From the New Testament era, the reported statements of Christ himself point in this direction;[1] and Paul's handling of sanctification is centered around the metaphors of the putting to death of the old life and the resurrection of the new.[2] While the desert fathers and the early monastic writers had interpreted mortification and self-denial in the sense of a superficial asceticism, Augustine, with his deeper insight into the corruption of human nature, emphasized once again the interior mortification of the roots of sin rather than exterior penance.[3] Theologians in the Augustinian tradition such as Calvin,[4] Owen,[5] and the

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1922], 218; III (Westminster, Md., 1953), 225. He is compelled to note, howeve that some of the greatest spiritual leaders in the Church have advocated and practiced transintellectual contemplation: Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Francis de Sales, and Vincent de Paul (Pourrat, *op. cit.*, III [Westminster, Md., 1953], 143, 200, 305, 393. Tanqueray's rather pedestrian manual on *The Spiritual Life*, like most Catholics, sticks to safer ground, holding that "Christian perfection is the logical outcome of dogma" -- (A. Tanqueray, *The Spiritual Life* tr. by Herman Branderis [2nd and rec. ed., Tournai, 1930], Author's preface). Our Puritans -- and possibly the Reformers -- would have preferred that post-Reformation Catholic mystics employed their minds in meditation rather than moving beyond them to a 'silence of the powers', but they would not have been happy with a perfection which is merely the logical outcome of dogma.)

[1] E. G. Matthew 16:24, 25; John 12:24, 25.

[2] E. g. Romans 6:1-11, 8:13; Colossians 3:3-5.

[3] P. Pourrat, *Christian Spirituality*, tr. by W. H. Mitchell and S. P. Jacques, I (London, 1922), Chs. II-VIII.

[4] J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, tr. by John Allen, I (Grand Rapids, 1949), 656-8 (III, iii, 8-9).

[5] John Owen, "The Mortification of Sin in Believers," in *Temptation and Sin* (Grand Rapids, 1958), pp. 5-33 (Chs. I-VI).

Counter-Reformation school of Berulle,[1] have constantly emphasized that the fallen nature in the Christian must not be domesticated or reformed or driven underground in some form of sublimated respectability, but must be put to death, and resurrected in a new life, no longer autonomous but under the control of the Spirit. Some have advised the Christian to follow the *via negativa*, following down the track of indwelling sin in the inner corridors of motivation -- and this is the predominant approach in Puritanism, as any reader of Owen's treatises can readily see[2] -- while others have stressed the *via positiva*, concentrating on the virtues aimed at rather than vices to be exterminated.[3] In either case, there has been a common recognition that the ground of this process of mortification/vivification lies in the mystical union of the believer with Christ in his death and resurrection, described by Paul in Rom. 6:1-19. The Cross and Resurrection are considered not merely convenient metaphors for psychological processes of death and rebirth, as they are in the writings of C. G. Jung and recent European theologians; in some mysterious way the believer is felt to have an ontological share in what happened on the Cross and afterward, so that the process of sanctification is just as Christocentric as the act of sanctification, and finds its center in the same locus: the Atonement.[1]

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[1] Pourrat, *op. cit.*, III (Westminster, Md., 1953), Chs. XII-XV. The teachi of Berulle, Condren and others of this latter school is a remarkable insular movement of serious Augustinianism in the seventeenth century, rather more balanced than Jansenism and thoroughly Pauline in its treatment of sanctification.

[2] Cf. Owen's statement: "The vigour, and power, and comfort of our spiritual life depends on the mortification of the deeds of the flesh," *op. cit.*, p. 9. Cf. also Owen's "Of Temptation: The Nature and Power of It," and "The Nature, Power, Deceit, and Prevalency of the Remainders of Indwelling Sin in Believers," in *Temptation and Sin* (Grand Rapids, 1958).

[3] Francis de Sales and later Salesians are perhaps the main exemplars of the *via positiva*. Adherents to this approach tend to be sub-Augustinian in general theological outlook.

We have already noted that there is a relative neglect of the subject of sanctification in Mather's writings because of the loading of conversion. Despite the bulk of his writings on the Christian life, Mather cannot be seen as a 'physician of the soul' in a class with certain Catholic and Protestant spiritual directors; he is more of a spiritual obstetrician. He usually views his congregation through a diagnostic mechanism which registers only 'dead' or 'alive', once-born or reborn: he does not seem very sensitive to degrees of life and growth in grace. He operates from a theological model which partially avoids the drift into works-righteousness to which the Catholic model of gradual salvation is liable, but which can lead to pastoral insensitivity and oversimplification.[2]

Usually this kind of simplification issues from a defective definition or consciousness of sin. In second century Christianity, for example, at least as represented in the Shepherd of Hermas, sin must be defined as gross miscarriage, violent conscious resistance to God's will in the form of some separable action or complex of acts, in order to m

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[1] Calvin, op. cit., I (Grand Rapids, 1958), 657 (III, iii, 9); Owen, "The Mortification of Sin in Believers," in Temptation and Sin (Grand Rapids, 1958), pp. 83-6; Pourrat, op. cit., III (Westminster, Md., 1953), pp. 342, 364-5.

[2] Cf. Gordon Wakefield's artful comparison: "The Catholic sees the long process of God's dealings with the soul, marked, if Catholic doctrine is to be restated at its best, by His infinite, agonizing patience. The Protestant is so overwhelmed by the miracle of saving grace that he sees the end in the beginning -- 'if thou convert me I shall be converted in an hour' -- even though he is, throughout the whole of his mortal life, foot-slogging the treacherous miles to the Celestial City." It should, of course, be possible to balance the Protestant view of justification and sanctification in a theological model which will do justice to both of these important values. (Wakefield, Puritan Devotion [London, 1957], p. 160.)

accomodate the common notion that sins committed after baptism will not be forgiven. And so there are only three categories: the baptized and spiritually living, the spiritual dead, and the apostate -- and no very deep understanding of the nurture and healing of wounded spirits trapped in pride, doubt, and alienation from God, the deeper roots of sin which are not clearly seen in surface actions. Similarly, in certain kinds of 'perfectionism' -- perhaps that of Wesley[1] and certainly that of Finney, where sin is defined simply as a voluntary transgression of a known law -- there is no extensive guide to sanctification, because the whole problem of continuing sin in the Christian has been misunderstood.

Mather's vision of the nature of sin is not defective in quite this way. In common with the Puritan tradition, and somewhat in contrast to Spener and Francke,[2] he repudiates perfectionism and holds that progress in sanctification involves a constant and deepening awareness of continuing sin.

> Be sure a *Sinless Perfection*, however it is to be *pursued*, it is not in this Life to be Attained, . . . Our Miscarriages are so Evident and so Multiplied, that we may well wonder at the Ignorant Pride of them who say, *We have no Sin*. The very best of our *Performances* are Defective, are Defiled; let *us* do our very Best, some Sin will still cleave unto it. *Repentance to the last*, is a *Thing* which all the Children of GOD see Reason for.[3]

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[1] R. Newton Flew, *The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology* (London, 1934), p. 332.

[2] Spener agreed with Wesley's later teaching that sanctification as well as justification was a fruit of faith, and held to a doctrine of *relative* perfection, a state in which sin was present but not reigning in the life. Francke retained this teaching. Evidently this doctrine is an effort to reflect faithfully New Testament passages such as Romans 6:11-14, and not the result of a superficial view of sin. *Vide* A. W. Nagler, *Pietism and Methodism* (Nashville, 1918), pp. 57, 127-8.

[3] C. Mather, *A Good Character* (Boston, 1723), p. 10.

He is aware of the fact that many gracious souls are still caught in deep-rooted bondages of sin, that "the Soul which has been truly Renewed by the Grace of God may have Indwelling Sin with so much Strength oppressing of it, that the _better Principle_ shall be scarce discernible. In some truly Regenerate Souls, the struggles between the _Spirit_ and the _Flesh_ are so dubiously managed, that one will have much ado to say, which overcomes."[1] Mather thus affirms that Paul's analysis in Rom. 7:14-23 is a description of his experience after conversion, and normative for regenerate Christians. He does not therefore consider that the path of the growing Christian is a series of glittering achievements of saintliness: "Alas, the Highest that we generally reach unto, is, to have _Desires_ of what we should reach unto. _Austin_ truly observed, That the _Life of a Christian is Little other than a course of Holy Desires_."[2] This does not however mean that the Christian is bound in a course of sinful actions in quite the same way as the unregenerate man, for "there is a difference between the _Consent_ which a _Godly Man_ yields unto Sin and the Consent given by a _Wicked Man_. When a _Godly Man Sins_, his fault rather lies in this, that he does not Deny, than that he does Consent. As when a thing is put unto the Vote, a Man who does not _oppose_, but only _suspend_ his Vote, in some sort, yields his Consent."[3] But the godly soul cannot rest easily in the presence of its own indwelling sin, rationalizing that this is an unescapable condition of earthly life.[4] And there is even a kind of evangelical perfection toward which the aspiring soul should strive and in which it should ultimately rest, for, "arriving to *Sincerity*, O *Walker* with God, thou art arrived at what may be esteemed a *Perfection* in the *Walk* with GOD."[1] Mather feels that in a developed state of sanctification it is even possible for a man "to be inspired with an *Antipathy* to every known *Sin*."[2] He is far from limiting our continuing sinfulness to such isolated atomic actions of the will, however, and he probes into states of alienation from God which lie beneath the surface of consciousness, considering these to be the most serious forms of indwelling sin.

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[1] C. Mather, _Utilia_ (Boston, 1716), p. 175.

[2] C. Mather, _Desiderius_ (Boston, 1719), p. 26.

[3] C. Mather, _Tremenda_ (Boston, 1721), p. 6.

[4] C. Mather, _A Good Character_ (Boston, 1723), p. 12.

> Some of you may *Go Mourning* . . . in Odious *Corruptions* from which you would fain be delivered. An *Hard Heart*, this pains you, afflicts you, affrights you! An *Earthly Mind*, the *Chains* of that are galling to you. Impurities vex your Souls, make you weary of your Lives. Your *Sloth*, your *Pride*, your Froward *Anger*, the Squinting and Evil Eye of *Envy*, haunting of you: These are cruel *Burdens* on you.[3]

Mather does carry over from the Catholic heritage the notion of the 'besetting sin' or 'master sin':[4] Each age and place has its own characteristic expressions of sin, and so does each individual personality, and the course of sanctification lies in a continual searching out of the peculiar sins of our age and our own character. Mather's understanding of what Paul calls 'the flesh' (σάρξ) holds therefore that while every part of human nature unrenovated by the Spirit is uncontrollably averse to God and His ways -- the mind in its thinking, the affections in their motivating energy, and the will in its decision -- the various branches of sin are organized around a central trunk which is the 'master sin.' The enemies of our souls would be able to do us little harm, he says, if there were not

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 11.

[2] C. Mather, *The Curbed Sinner* (Boston, 1713), p. 16.

[3] C. Mather, *Pastoral Desires* (Boston, 1712), p. 100.

[4] Pourrat (*op. cit*., II [London, 1924], 146) notes the growth of this emphasis in late Medieval writers, and observes that it was common in Loyola and other Counter-Reformation authors.

> . . . some peculiar *Lust*, like a *Trojan Horse*, within us, assisting of all their Enterprises . . . A *Lust* which above other, does most *Disquiet* you, and *Discompose* you in the Service of God; a *Lust* which gives most frequent Eclipses unto the *Light* of God's Countenance upon your souls . . . The *Braining* of this *Giant* is of as much Importance perhaps, as any one thing in your *Warfare*, as having an Influence upon the Prosperity of it all.[1]

But this 'lust' is not conceived of as a unitary action of the will occasionally cropping up on the surface of consciousness. It is much more like what modern psychology has called a 'complex,' a matrix of subconscious motivations controlling the life from beneath a surface cover of rationalizations. This is no superficial insight into the nature and structure of human depravity. As for the identity of these 'master sins,' although Mather feels that there is a peculiar danger of defilement in sensual sins connected with drunkenness and unchastity,[2] and in sins involving hostility, he feels that the great trunk of the tree of human sinfulness lies in such radical evils as idolatry, "the *Principal Crime of* Mankind,"[3] and pride, for "every *Sin* (as one says of every *man*) hath a *Pope* in the *Belly* of it; something that *Exalts it self against all that is called* GOD."[4] So radical is this evil that God may even allow the soul to fall into more gross displays of corruptions in order to dry up the roots of pride:

> I am now preparing, *A Treacle out of a Viper*. Since we have not been *Withheld* from some very Enormous *Out-breakings of Sin*, by this very *Thing*, we may and should be *Withheld* from One Sin which is very offensive to the most High God; such an Offense, that He *knows* them, &

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[1] C. Mather, *Military Duties* (Boston, 1687), pp. 70-1.

[2] C. Mather, *The Christian Temple* (Boston, 1706), p. 22.

[3] C. Mather, *Icono-Clastes* (Boston, 1717), p. 2.

[4] C. Mather, *Speedy Repentance Urged* (Boston, 1690), p. 11.

> thrusts them *afar off*, and makes Rejected *Lepers* of them that are under the power of it; PRIDE is that Sin. It may be, our *Pride* caused our *Fall*; And now our *Fall* may cure our *Pride*. . . . If a *proud Thought* begin to rise in our Minds, we should presently retund it, with such a Stroke upon it; *What! Such a wretch as I, ever be proud of any thing!* When we meet with any *Contemptuous Treatment* among our neighbours, we should now bear it very patiently . . . And, when we see others *Overtaken with a Fault*, with what Compassion, with what Levity, with what Clemency, should we now dulcify the *Reproofs*, which we must give unto them![1]

All of this is solidly Augustinian. It is odd, and indicative, however, that Mather has no extended treatment of the subject of recovery for the backslidden soul, which is a point of eminent importance for Catholic piety and post-Finneyan revivalism, and not unknown among Puritans.[2] Mather rarely alludes to the Old Testament term, 'backsliding.'[3] He does often describe the condition to which it refers, especially in his Jeremiads; but his diagnosis here is usually derived from the New Testament: lack of conversion. He does speak of the somnolent Christian, who still can say, "I sleep, but my heart wakes."[4] But Mather's usual complaint about his unresponsive hearers is not that they are asleep, but that they are dead. Thus, in his usage, backsliding does not refer to those lengthy detours from the road to the Celestial City which non-Puritan pastors have resigned themselves to watching patiently in their parishioners. These Mather would attribute either to lack of definitive conversion, or to decay and apostasy from "common grace convictions" which never went the whole course to achieve a sound conversion.[5] Any man who could attain to the heights understood to be normative for Puritan conversion would perhaps rarely fall back into those total eclipses of spirituality to which Christiams who have had less demanded of them at the start, such as the Catholic believer and the Arminian convert, would be liable. The initial convictions which Puritans expected were supposed to penetrate very deeply in the mortification of human sinfulness, even down to the very roots of pride itself;[1] as Mather puts it, "A man is never truly Converted, except he be Converted from Self, as well as from Sin."[2] Those who could clear this kind of hurdle would form a small cadre of extremely dedicated laymen. Puritanism specialized in turning out a small, carefully crafted body of such leaders, who were, we might say, pre-sanctified, spiritual chronometers who were so well-tested in the process of assemblage that they would never need much subsequent maintenance. There is something to be said for this approach to pastoral work, but it does not allow for the bruised reeds and smoldering wicks which Jesus mentions, and for that large percentage of Christians who have genuine rootage but bear little fruit because of the cares of the world and the delight in riches.[3]

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[1] C. Mather, *The Curbed Sinner* (Boston, 1713), p. 36.

[2] Cf. Richard Sibbes, *The Returning Backslider* (Ann Arbor, 1957).

[3] מְשׁוּבָה

[4] C. Mather, *Vigilius* (Boston, 1719), p. 10.

[5] Cf. Mather's *Agricola* (Boston, 1727), pp. 47-8.

Mather understands the Pauline doctrine of the grounding of the process of Mortification/Vivification in the believer's union with Christ in his death and resurrection, though he mentions it rather infrequently. Defining the nature of the unio Christi, he notes that it is not so purely mental or metaphorical that we have no real ontological connection with the Savior, and yet not so literal that we become part of the Godhead. It is a union which is most intimate, so that Christ himself is in us as a vital principle through the presence of his Spirit; and yet the exact nature of it is quite mysterious, like the union of the persons within the Trinity or the relation between the two natures of Christ.[1] In a few places Mather closely connects the process of mortification with this union. In a sermon on Rom. 6:3, 4, he notes that

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[1] Cf. L. Trinterud, The Forming of an American Tradition (Philadelphia, 1949), p. 185.

[2] C. Mather, The Armour of Christianity (Boston, 1704), p. 125.

[3] Cf. Matthew 12:20, 13:22.

> We are by our *Baptism* obliged unto a conformity unto the *Death* of our *Buried JESUS*, and unto His *Rising* again; unto His *Death* in our *dying* to Sin; unto His *Rising* again in our *living* to GOD . . . O! that I may feel the Virtue of His *Death*, in a *Death* brought upon all my evil Appetites; and my *dying* to the Troubles, as well as the Delights of this world . . . *United* unto my *living* SAVIOUR. O! that I may feel the Virtue of *His Life*, in my being brought unto the *Life* of GOD, and so quickened from Him, that it may be *no longer I that live, but CHRIST living in me*.[2]

There is a hint of moralism here: Christ's death and resurrection as a symbol of what must happen within us, rather than as an actual source of power for revitalization of our life. And yet the mystical note is also present. Another sermon notes that Christ is especially to be acknowledged not merely in his procuring our justification for the pardon of our sins, but also in his securing the death of our sin: "You will Zealously seek the *Death* of every *Irregular Lust* in your own Souls . . . It must be by Pleading the *Death* of a Glorious CHRIST as Purchasing for you, such a Blessing of God. Plead it with *Strong Cries and Tears*, until an Efficacious Order come forth from God, That the *Sin* shall no longer *have Dominion* over you."[3] What Mather recommends is curiously unlike the terse and bold statement of Paul, "Consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."[4] 'Considering,' reckoning as a matter of faith, is a little too easy a victory for Mather; he must also bring in "Strong Cries, and Tears" to insure the sincerity of the believer and persuade the divine sovereignty.

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[1] C. Mather, *Blessed Unions* (Boston, 1692), pp. 11-20.

[2] C. Mather, *Baptismal Piety* (Boston, 1727), pp. 5-7.

[3] C. Mather, *The Heavenly Conversation* (Boston, 1710), p. 9.

[4] Romans 6:11 (RSV).

Thus, in the majority of those occasions when Mather refers to the event of the Cross and its relationship to the believer, he is making use of it as a devotional lever to motivate the pursuit of mortification, rather than referring to the Atonement as the source of power for the freeing of the personality from the grip of sin. Sometimes this leverage is gained through meditation on the sufferings of Christ, for "it hath been said, *Crux pendantis est Cathedra Docetis*, -- thus, while you Behold Him *hanging* on the *Cross*, let Him *Teach* you how to *War*, and to *Fight*, especially against the *Sin which doth most easily beset you*."[1] At times there is a development of the obvious allegorical relationship between our mortification of sin and Christ's death.

> Let your *Principle Corruption* be put unto such a *Death* as your Dying Savior has given a *Semplar* of. It is said by the apostle in Rom. 6:4 That we must be *dead to Sin*, even as Jesus Christ *died for Sin* . . . Handle it with *Severities* analogous to those which Jesus Christ was crucified withal. Did they withdraw all Refreshment from our Lord Jesus Christ, in His rueful *Agonies* . . . Just so, Do you withhold from your *Lust* that *Sustenance* . . . Did they *Torture* our Lord Jesus Christ . . . ? Do you make your *Lust* undergo the *Pains* of an *evil and a bitter thing*. Let it Cost you those Prayers, and those Tears, and manifold *Austerities*, which may *tire* it out and Discourage it from *haunting* of you.[2]

There is a note of asceticism here -- in the sense of antipathy to pleasure -- which comes out again in Mather's discussion of John Eliot:

> It were impossible to finish the lively picture of this pious and holy Eliot, without some touches upon that *mortification* which accompanied him all his days; for never did I see a person more mortified unto all the pleasures of this life, or more unwilling to *moult* the wings of an heaven-born soul in the dirty puddles of

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[1] C. Mather, *Military Duties* (Boston, 1687), p. 69.

[2] *Ibid*., pp. 72, 74.

> carnal and sensual delights. We are all of us compounded of those two things, the *man* and *the beast*; but so powerful was the *man* in this holy person, that it kept the *beast* ever tyed with a short tedder, and suppressed the irregular *calcitrations* of it. He became so nailed unto the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, that the grandeurs of this world were unto him just what they would be to a dying man . . . The "lust of the flesh" he could not reconcile himself to the least pampering or indulging of: but he persecuted it with a continual antipathy . . . The sleep that he allowed himself, cheated him not of his morning hours . . . Rich varieties, costly viands, and poinant sauces, came not upon his *own* table, and when he found them on other men's, he rarely tasted of them . . . And for a supper, he had learned of his loved and blessed patron, old Mr. Cotton, either wholly to omit it, or to make a small sup or two the utmost of it. The *drink* which he still used was very small; he cared not for *wines* or *drams*, and I believe he never once in all his life knew what it was to feel so much as a noxious fume in his head from any of them: good, clear WATER was more *precious*, as well as more *usual* with him.[1]

The concept here of man as a compound of reason and animal nature, and the identification of the latter with the biblical σάρξ, are remarkably un-Pauline, and even atypical compared with most Puritanism and Mather himself in more enlightened moments. There is a testimony here to the strong hold which Medieval and Patristic models of sanctification had on Mather. The covert antipathy to sensory pleasure which always peers around the edge of the Puritan ethic comes out again in a diary passage in which Mather equates modification with denial of normal enjoyments:

> Breathing in the midst of so many *Deaths*, what can there be so needful and so proper for me, as for me to *Die Daily*, and become a Man dead unto this World; crucified unto all worldly Enjoyments and Impressions! I resolve . . . to be restless until I find a very sensible and powerful Mortification brought upon all my Inclinations for this World, and every Thing that is in it.[2]

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[1] C. Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, I (Hartford, 1855), pp. 537-8.

[2] C. Mather, *Diary*, II (New York, 1957), 264 (November, 1713). The Georges are correct in their contention that the overall thrust of English Puritanism was anti-ascetic in contrast to Rome (*vide* C. H. and K. George, *The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation* [Princeton, 1961], pp. 50, 11-12, 268); but the Puritans were also reacting against cheap grace, and they did have a strong admiration for Patristic asceticism. In *The Good Old Way* (Boston, 1706), Mather admires the fathers for looking on the pleasures of eating and drinking as poisons, fasting to the point of emaciation, and many other austerities (pp. 14-21).

By far the majority of Mather's references to mortification, however, deal not with the inward 'putting to death by the Spirit' of the roots of sin, but with outward afflictions brought upon us by Providence as 'crosses' which mortify our sinful natures, supposedly in a depth which could seldom be managed by the interior work of the Spirit alone. This interpretation of 'bearing the cross' and self-denial was, of course, a familiar part of the Protestant tradition, much emphasized by Luther, as Mather notes:

> Luther called Affliction, Theologium Christianorum; A Christians learning of Divinity. And, It was a Good Speech of Luthers vertuous Wife, There are many sweet Psalms in the Bible, and I had never known the meaning or the sweetness of them, if God had not brought me unto some Affliction. Truly, In the Frosty Nights of our Troubles, more of the Stars of Heaven shine upon us, than at other Times.[1]

Mather even goes so far as to say that the largest part of the work of sanctification in our lives is done in the way of passive obedience under afflictions.[2] There are some lessons which will never be learned unless they are written into the spirit by the iron pen of Providence.

> There is a *Moral Death*, to be pursued and obtained; A *Death* upon our Vitious Appetites; a *Death* wherein we shall have our *Lusts Mortified*; a *Death* in which we shall be *Dead with* CHRIST, and have nothing but a CHRIST left *Alive* unto us, in regard of any strong Relish in our Souls . . . Our Faithful SAVIOR sends *Killing things* upon us; perhaps they are without a *Metaphor* so. He *Loves* us, when He *Kills* us.[3]

Of course, it is true that men can grow spiritually in conditions of happiness, since these also are tests of faith:

> Indeed, all the Providences of God unto the Children of men are *Probations* . . . When we are *praised* by our Neighbours we are Tried

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[1] C. Mather, *Triumphs over Troubles* (Boston, 1701), p. 21. Cf. Arndt's *Of True Christianity*, tr. by A. W. Boehm (2nd Eng. ed., London, 1720), II:38, III:23. Arndt rejects as an error the notion that the cross and mortification are merely outward afflictions rather than an inner reality wrought by the Spirit, but still persists in speaking of the 'Benefits of the Cross' as the fruits of affliction.

[2] C. Mather, *Insanabilia* (Boston, 1714), p. 29.

[3] C. Mather, *Silentiarius* (Boston, 1721), pp. 22-3.

> in those praises. And thus, when we are blessed by our Maker, we are Tried in those blessings. Honors from below, they do, indicare virum, or Try what metal the man is made of . . . So Mercies from above do the like . . . So does our God bring us to the Rivers of plenty, and says, I will Try them there.[1]

But Mather inclines to feel that the best climates for spiritual growth are those in which the darkness and cold of affliction predominates.

> Now, a mixture of Adversity is tho' our Corruptions, become necessary, to prevent in us that criminal Forgetfulness, and produce in our Minds, those frames of Piety, and Submission, and Humility, which are but agreeable Preparatives for our Admission into that State of Glory, wherein God shall be All in All unto us.[2]

> The growth of Thorns in This, is wisely ordered by Heaven, to prepare a Good Man, for another and a better World . . . As Holy Baines Expressed it; God is fain, with many Trials, to Smoke us out of the World.[3]

In The Religion of the Cross (1714), for example, Mather's doctrinal explication of the title is that "Christians must receive whatever afflictive Cross God ordains."[4] There is a poignant ring of personal experience in his treatment of one form of affliction, the endurance of slander, which he finds a very searching instrument for the mortification of his own acknowledged besetting sin, pride.

> If God single out you, to be made an Object of numberless Indignities and Malignities, and satisfy himself in beholding what is done to you, . . . there is nothing to be murmured at . . . It will be but a due compliance with the Righteousness of God, for you to confess before him, That He is infinitely just in the greatest Injustice that any reproaching Man, can offer you. You know so much amiss by yourself, that if it were all known abroad in the World, they who now falsely speak what is ill of you, might very truly speak what is a good deal worse . . . Humble yourself deeply before God, for this Secret Sin . . . I am sure there will need

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[1] C. Mather, Meat Out of the Eater (Boston, 1703), p. 41.

[2] C. Mather, The Cure of Sorrow (Boston, 1709), p. 9.

[3] C. Mather, Nunc Dimitis (Boston, 1709), p. 14.

[4] C. Mather, The Religion of the Cross (Boston, 1714), pp. 16-17.

> no long Divination, to bring you unto this one, sensible stroke of Repentance.[1]

He can grow positively enthusiastic over the sanctifying possibilities of Hardship: "the delights of afflictions, the *Delights* in thus *parting with Delights*! I tell you truly, you will find them Wonderful! Wonderful! Wonderful!"[2] But there is no sign in him of the notion that souls of a saintly temper will actively crave afflictions, as penance, which is fairly common in Counter-Reformation piety.[3] Yet as he grows older, an almost stoical note creeps into Mather's sermons, most notably in *Tela Praevisa* (1724), an essay on foreseen troubles, which states that "we should live in continual Expectation of Troubled Changes."[4] In *The Religion of the Cross* (1714), Mather advises the readers to "Be Daily Thinking, This Day, May for ought I know, bring some New Cross upon Me."[5]

As Mather's own life began to come under the pressure of losses and afflictions, we find a growing interest in his writings in the concepts of *sacrifice* and *resignation*. The sermon, *The High Attainment* (1703), the first major treatment of this subject, is based on the doctrinal statement that "Resignation to the Will of God is a mark of eminent sainthood."

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[1] C. Mather, *The Right Way to Shake Off a Viper* (Boston, 1711), pp. 3-4. The concluding observation is almost identical to a remark of Teresa of Avila.

[2] C. Mather, *Utilia* (Boston, 1716), p. 103.

[3] E. g. in Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross; *Vide* P. Pourrat, *Christian Spirituality*, tr. by W. H. Mitchell and S. P. Jacques, III (Westminster, Md., 1953), 168, 182. The thinly disguised masochism involved in much Catholic mysticism is perhaps a result of an unbiblical understanding of justification, issuing in a need for self-punishment.

[4] C. Mather, *Tela Praevisa* (Boston, 1724).

[5] C. Mather, *The Religion of the Cross* (Boston, 1714), p. 25. Beyreuther notes that neo-stoicism had been gaining influence on the Continent since the beginning of the seventeenth century, and may have had some impact on the Pietists; *vide August Hermann Francke und die Anfange der Ökumenischen Bewegung* (Hamburg-Bergstedt, 1957), p. 252.

Resignation is defined not as stoical apathy, or a patient putting-up with the vagaries of Providence, however, but as a welcoming of affliction as a sanctifying aid, discerning God's hand behind it, affirming his continued love and goodness, and suppressing the murmurs of our wills. Mather includes a form for an "Action of Retired Christianity," "which by being often done, every time we do it, we shall gain more and more ground upon our will, and at length gain the point of a most Resigned Will."[1] This 'gaining ground' he speaks of many times as an increasingly complete yielding of the entire personality to the possession and control of the Holy Spirit.[2]

Mather rarely connects the progress of resignation in the soul with the _unio Christi_.[3] More generally, resignation is the manward side of sanctification, in which the human ego coöperates with the Holy Spirit in the passive mortification of its old life. By the end of his life, Mather regarded this early formulation of "Let go, and let God" as both the royal road to sanctification and the mark of the highest degree of piety, as the "Pitch of Elevated Christianity . . . _To Delight in Sacrificing of Delights_: To _Delight_ in doing the part of _Sacrificers_."[4] He himself speaks of the frequency with which he employed the concept of resignation,[5] and Colman in his funeral eulogy notes this as almost a trademark of Mather's later ministry.[6] There are strong resemblances here to the teachings of Catholic Quietism, which, through the writings of Molinos, had a great deal of influence on Francke and Halle Pietism.[1] Mather hints at some sympathies in this direction: "The Incomparable Tallents, would sometimes ingeniously say, The Quietists are the best Christians. This I will say, A Quietism, that lies in a Soul cured of all Sadness by being Poured out before the Lord, is Excellent Christianity."[2] He can even admire a Catholic's lack of assurance for its quality of resignation: "It was a sweet speech that fell from the Pen of the Renowned Chancellour of Paris, I don't know what the Lord intends to do with me forever, but this I know . . . He is worthy that I should Love Him & Serve Him, and I will do so."[3] In one place he entertains the resignatio ad infernum as a possibility.

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[1] C. Mather, _The High Attainment_ (Boston, 1703), p. 26.

[2] C. Mather, _The Christian Temple_ (Boston, 1706), p. 19.

[3] C. Mather, _Agricola_ (Boston, 1727), p. 150.

[4] C. Mather, _The Nightingale_ (Boston, 1724), p. 15.

[5] C. Mather, _The True Riches_ (Boston, 1724), p. iv.

[6] B. Colman, _The Holy Walk of Blessed Enoch_ (Boston, 1728), p. 26.

> If such a Thought should come unto thy Soul; What if the Glorious, and Righteous, and Sovereign GOD, should forever cast me off? 'Tis not a thought indeed that we are called unto. But if uncalled it thrust itself in upon us, Dost thou come to This; Yet will I adore Him, and forever silence all Murmuring against Him? Yea, I will take part with Him against my self, and be satisfied that He is glorified! -- The Holy SPIRIT of GOD will now undoubtedly come in upon thee with His Testimony: No . . . I will not cast thee off . . . Could a soul be sent unto Hell with such Things in it, it would carry Heaven thither with it.[4]

There is some reservation here, however, which Mather spells out elsewhere: "There is a Sacred Indifferency of will, which we should maintain towards every thing, but the Spiritual Blessings, which tis a Cursed Thing to be willing to go without."[1] It appears from this that Mather concurred with Catholic orthodoxy in condemning extreme Quietism.

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[1] Francke translated Molinos and was somewhat influenced by him, as Beyreuther indicates (August Hermann Francke, 1663-1727, Zeuge des lebendigen Gottes [2te Aufl., Marburg, 1961], pp. 39, 53), although not to the degree claimed by Peschke (Studien zur Theologie August Hermann Franckes, I [Berlin, 1964], pp. 16, 150). Pourrat (op. cit., II [London, 1924] 229-32, 305), finds a pre-Quietist strain in the late Medieval mystics and in works like The Imitation of Christ, which probably passed directly into the Pietists, also.

[2] C. Mather, The Cure of Sorrow (Boston, 1709), p. 32.

[3] C. Mather, The Christian Thank Offering (Boston, 1696), p. 28.

[4] C. Mather, Signatus (Boston, 1727), pp. 39-40.

Besides the "act of resignation," there are, a great many other spiritual strategies for the pursuit of mortification which Mather recomends. There is a kind of instantaneous, on-the-spot meditation or 'consideration' of various sorts, centered on God's continuing surveillance of our lives,[2] the nature of sin and the fact that we are being tempted by the Devil,[3] the person of Christ;[4] or the last things.[5] There is also a constant and strenuous mental hand-to-hand combat which must be carried on in the center of the personality to repel sinful thoughts and so check the seeds of full-grown corruption, for "there is that Spirituality in the Law of God, that it lays injunctions on the very Thoughts of men: and lays Restraints on the First Motions of Sins in the Thoughts; and even batters out the Brains of the Bratts in the very First Conceptions of them."[6] Along with an instantaneous mobilization against the outbreakings of indwelling sin, the clipping off of its visible extrusions, there is to be a constant mortification of its inner substance -- and particularly where it has massed itself in 'besetting sins' -- through continually enlarging our understanding of the nature of our particular sin and a deepening repentance with respect to it. This is the only effective means of getting at the roots of such eruptions, for as we have noted, Mather's understanding of sin goes far beneath the conception of it as visible and isolated atomic acts.

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[1] C. Mather, The High Attainment (Boston, 1703), p. 17.

[2] C. Mather, Sincere Piety Described (Boston, 1719), p. 15.

[3] C. Mather, Diary, II (New York, 1957), 443 (March, 1716/17).

[4] C. Mather, The Pure Nazarite (Boston, 1723), p. 14.

[5] C. Mather, Nicetas (Boston, 1705), p. 42.

[6] C. Mather, Sincere Piety Described (Boston, 1719), p. 8.

This proliferation of methods for exterminating sin, drawn from Patristic and Medieval sources, is a far cry from later teachings on the 'victorious life' which, following Wesley, would stress the exercise of faith in Christ's finished work and dependence on the Spirit, and treat Mather's practices as an attempt to "make perfect in the flesh what was begun in the Spirit."[1] Mather's occasional exhortations to "act faith peculiarly upon the death, blood, and cross of Christ," as Owen puts it,[2] are lost in a profusion of other prescriptions; and at times it seems that where sin might be dispatched cleanly with one Christologically centered bullet, Mather is advising us how to torture it to death with a variety of racks, boots, and thumbscrews. On the other hand, there is hardly a strategy or practice he favors which cannot somewhere be grounded biblically. More recent approaches may not quite do justice to the difficulties of sanctification -- as if a physician were to attempt to cure all illnesses with wonder drugs, without recognizing the concommitant importance of proper diet, rest, isolation, and careful nursing. The Puritan medicine chest was crowded with centuries of theological folk-remedies; but it recognized at least the seriousness and tenacity of the disease of sin in human nature, and endeavored to attack it from all directions. It is also true that most of the methods Mather recommends are united in a common assumption, which is that the most important aids in the mortification of sin come through the channels of knowledge and understanding, that it is light which kills the roots of sin, so to speak -- continued light about one's own makeup, and about God's nature and His gracious provision. There is a recognition that without the Spirit's power all the knowledge in the world will not avail much, but the main exhortations offered are to seek a more and more deeply ingrained understanding of the doctrines of grace and the self which is mirrored in the application of the Law by the Spirit.

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[1] Galatians 3:3 (RSV).

[2] John Owen, "Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers," in Temptation and Sin (Grand Rapids, 1958), p. 83.

It may seem to the reader at this point that we have spent a great deal of space describing Mather's approach to mortification, enough to belie the previous statement that he is deficient in the breadth of his handling of sanctification. But it is still the case that Mather's relatively complete reflection of the Puritan approach to sanctification which he inherited is scattered through a fairly small body of his writing, whereas his concern for regeneration comes out in nearly every separate work he wrote. I do not intend to attribute all of this relative imbalance simply to the hypertrophy of conversion in his tradition. Mather's own temperament leaned increasingly away from the via negativa as his life progressed. He continued to examine regularly the roots of corruption in his nature; but increasingly he also looked outward, in that fascination for positive projects of good will for which he is famous. After 1709 his Diary ceases to record the details of his soul-struggles and becomes an account of his weekly cycle of "Good Devices," in which the whole territory of his life is mapped into seven regions as a farmer divides his land into fields, with a day given to some project of planting or harvest in each area. Moving in this direction, Mather opens himself to the charge of moralism. We must now move on to examine the validity of this and certain other charges that have been made against him.

4 . Ethics

If Mather did not entirely excel as a spiritual director, he was still a powerful and original influence in another area connected with sanctification, that of personal ethics. This study of his ethical teaching will concentrate on several areas where, either rightly or wrongly, he has been subject to criticism.

A. Mather's Moralism

Cotton Mather is at this writing generally considered almost the inventor of a certain brand of moralism which European theologians have found somehow peculiarly American. We have already explored Mather's doctrinal relationship to the Enlightenment, and will proceed now to examine the charge of shallow activism which has been a standard feature of his public image since Wendell's biography.

There is no doubt that Mather was, in theory, and very often in practice, a dynamic activist. His interest in "essays to do good" began long before the shift in 1709 which transformed his Diary into an anthology of good devices. Samuel Mather says that the concept of 'doing good' as an expression of godliness was with his father from his teens.[1] A note made when Mather was eighteen records his new resolution "to have my sett Times for Meditations on that Enquiry, what is there that I may do for the Interests of God,"[2] which is just a simplified form of his later weekly cycle of searching for projects.[3] The essence of his later emphasis is found in The Serviceable Man (1690), a Jeremiad on the threatened decay of New England which notes the activism of the enemies of God and calls for opposing action on the part of "those who would do good."[1] Following the publication of Bonifacius, in 1710, Mather's references to benevolent action become much more numerous, and almost thematic for his later writing. In 1722, he describes the whole course of the pastoral ministry as a mission servanthood in doing good to the community. His argument for this sounds rather eudaemonistic:

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[1] S. Mather, Life of Cotton Mather (Boston, 1729), p. 10.

[2] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 36 (October, 1681).

[3] Cf. S. Mather, Life of Cotton Mather (Boston, 1729), p. 10.

> The Peace and Joy that may fill the Mind of the Serviceable Man: How can this by any other than Wonderful! While he is doing Service for GOD and Man, he has a Conscience which Comforts him with a, Well-done! The Comforts of a good Conscience may be a continual Feast unto him . . . No Epicure can swim in such Delights as the Man that is useful . . . My constant Counsel would be: Be Fruitful: This is the way to be Joyful. Be up, and be doing. Activity, Activity in the Service of GOD, and His People; This will be most likely to be followed, and rewarded, with Triumphant Satisfaction.[2]

In later years he defines 'walking with God' and even 'asceticism' in terms of ethical activism:

> Walking has a Motion in it. In a Life of PIETY, we are to be full of Motion. A good Man is never to be at a Stand. He knows the meaning of a Standing fast, but he knows not the meaning of a Standing still . . . He must be ever Doing something in the work of GOD . . . There is a Labor in this Motion. Walking is an Exercise. A Life of PIETY was called, askesis, or, In Exercise, in the Language of Primitive Christianity. It is a life of Ascetics . . . 'Tis a patient

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[1] C. Mather, The Serviceable Man (Boston, 1690). Mather thus proposed an aggressive Christian activism just at the point when New England was passing out of its theocratic phase. Miller's interpretation of Mather's pietism as a mechanism for recapturing cultural control is thus partially validated, except that its origin is located at least two decades before the publication of Bonifacius (1710), which Miller identifies as the inception of this emphasis; vide The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), pp. 410-16. But Mather's pietistic activism was, of course, much more than a gambit in the struggle for control of New England; it was an organic outgrowth of Puritanism which that struggle only helped to stimulate and shape.

[2] C. Mather, The Minister (Boston, 1722), p. 14.

Continuance in Well-doing.[1]

The proximate influence on Cotton Mather's activism was undoubtedly the temperament of his father.[2] But the same quality is observable in Baxter,[3] and in fact the Puritan tradition from early pastors onward is essentially activistic, motivated by a theocratic community concern and a doctrine of vocation which necessitated the crowding of every waking moment with fruitful activity.[4] Its correlative emphasis on contact with God and the development of the inner life may seem to harmonize poorly with this fact, until we realize that for the Puritan, mysticism and activism are intimately and organically connected.

> The very activism of the Protestant -- indeed, his refusal to cut himself off institutionally from the world -- creates a pressure of special intensity toward interiorizing religious life, toward so profound a deepening and strengthening of the life of the spirit that the inward may not only stand as a bulwark against the outward but may also penetrate and sanctify it.[5]

But the same activism was present in the hurricane of civic and spiritual action which was Francke's Halle.[6] It is visible also in most of the figures involved in the Great Awakening, and the cultural transformation left in the aftermath of this movement is well-known. It begins to appear that it was not just Mather who was an activist, but everyone who had anything to do with the Puritan/Pietist experiential synthesis.[1]

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[1] C. Mather, A Good Character (Boston, 1723), p. 3.

[2] K. B. Murdock, Increase Mather (Cambridge, Mass., 1926), p. 85.

[3] Hugh Martin, Puritanism and Richard Baxter (London, 1954), p. 84.

[4] C. H. and K. George, The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation (Princeton, 1961), pp. 153 ff.

[5] Ibid., p. 30.

[6] E. Beyreuther, August Hermann Francke und die Anfange der Ökumenischen Bewegung (Hamburg-Bergstedt, 1957), pp. 37, 82.

If Mather's activism is not peculiar to himself, however, it is still possible to assert that there was something peculiar about the intensity and the motivational roots of it. But the "ceaseless, driven activist" of Wendell's biography and subsequent portrayals is only one of several possible projections from the sources, and not the most likely one. It is not difficult to make a case for Mather as primarily a contemplative, who spent most of his time laying out on paper the possibilities for action. We have noted that after 1709 he followed a cyclical pattern of meditation during the days of the week to think up new projects of benevolence. The cycle was as follows:

> I. *Lord's day* Morning . . . *What Service to be done* . . . *in the FLOCK* . . .
> II. MUNDAY Morning, *what to be done in MY FAMILY?*
> III. TUESDAY Morning . ... Two *Quaestions* alternately. On the First Week . . . *What Service to be done for Christ, and my* RELATIVES ABROAD? . . . Every other Week, instead of my *Relatives*, . . . I singled out my *personal Enemies* . . . and considered, *what good may I do unto them?*
> IV. WEDNESDAY Morning . . . *What Service to be done for Christ* . . . *in the Country, or among other People?*
> V. THURSDAY Morning; *what Service in and for the SOCIETIES?*
> VI. FRIDAY Morning, what particular Objects of Compassion have I to do good unto? Here, I fill'd my *List*, successively, with *afflicted* People. And, I did what I could for them.
> VII. . . . SATUREDAY Morning . . . *What remains to be done for the Kingdome of God in* MY OWN HEART AND LIFE?[2]

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[1] It is no accident that a nineteenth-century American Sunday School tract can present Francke in terms reflecting the purest Matherian activism: "He was never willing to suffer opportunities for doing good, to pass by unimproved;" "And what may we learn from his history? One plain lesson is, that the amount of good which we may do, is immense. There was nothing that Francke attempted, which is not practical at the present day. We may labour for the salvation of our fellow-men, for the education of the ignorant, for the relief of the distressed, and for the extension of the knowledge of the gospel among the heathen. We may, like him, preach the gospel and circulate Bibles and tracts; and we too may have that faith which overcomes the world . . ." (Rezeau Brown, *Memoirs of A. H. Francke* [Philadelphia, 1831], pp. 40, 178-9.)

[2] C. Mather, *Diary*, II (New York, 1957), 24-8 (February, 1709/10).

The orderly care and the generous spirit are praiseworthy here. It is not impossible, however, that Mather did not always get around to all of these devices promptly; and of course several of them pertain strictly to Mather himself and his household. The fact that he localizes his concern for "the FLOCK" on only one day of the week suggests the possibility that Mather in fact had some spare time on his hands, and was really hard put to it to think up projects to fill this vacuum, since the Puritan pastorate had not yet evolved (or devolved) into the machinery of administrative activity in which the modern clergy is caught. Mather wanted to sound like an heroic activist on paper; he ended up sounding like a neurotic activist to his critics; and he probably was neither, but simply a typical conscientious Puritan with a somewhat overdeveloped interest in letting his right hand know what his left hand was doing.

Whether or not Mather was an activist, Perry Miller contends that he was infected with Enlightenment moralism, although he gave lip-service to justifying and sanctifying grace.

> The old theology is left . . . behind . . . The real incentive to doing good is made a delicious, swooning joy of the thing itself: "It is an Incomparable Pleasure," and a man "must Embrace it with Rapture." There is not a single proposal here advanced but what, well pursued, "would yield the mind a more Solid and Lasting Satisfaction, than the Solution of all the Problems in Euclid."[1]

Taken by itself, the Bonifacius does have a definite propensity to moralism, in that 'the good' is chosen as the regenerate man's ethical goal, rather than 'the will of God.' Mather says we are to be humbled because we have done so little good in the world, not because we have sinned against God.[2] It is true, again, that Mather in certain places makes a great emphasis on the Golden Rule,

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[1] Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), p. 413.

[2] C. Mather, Bonifacius (Boston, 1710), pp. 24 ff.

> . . . . the most Refined MORALITY that ever was introduced among the Children of Men: The most Complete Rule that can be given, to Regulate our Manners, and make us Happy in one another . . . This One Word brought into Numberless Affairs, MAKE IT YOUR OWN CASE . . . This One Ingenuous Word, how powerfully would it correct and prevent IRREGULARITIES.[1]

But we misread Mather if we project on him the image of the modern Protestant who 'keeps the Golden Rule, the Sermon on the Mount, and the Ten Commandments.' For Mather, the Golden Rule was only another of the profound and weighty statements of his Savior, written also on the hearts of men through general revelation; and he was depressed to see that Christians who pretended to hear the Spirit speaking through special revelation were utterly blind even to the light of nature. The feeling is not unknown to churchmen today, reflecting on the millions of professing Christians, or at least intermittent church-attenders, who cannot see how they should 'make it their own case' in issues of social justice.

It is true also that Mather puts occasional emphasis on the actions of Christ as a moral rule, in the manner of In His Steps. "What a sort of a Walk was His? We read in Acts 10:38 He went about doing good. He walked in all manner of Piety and Charity: He Walked in a perpetual endeavour to please and serve His Fathers."[2] He will go so far as to say that "It is not the Recitation of a Creed, but the Imitation of a Christ, that will make a Christian."[3] But the context of these statements is so qualified with doctrinal buttresses that only by ripping them out in isolation can they be turned to prove moralism. Mather was bound to bring Christ into his ethics as well as his soteriology. He was a great admirer of Thomas à Kempis, and he placed a full mystical content in the concept of imitating Christ which has been evacuated in modern Protestant moralism. He is not unaware of the misuse of this approach by Enlightenment moralists:

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[1] C. Mather, Piety and Equity United (Boston, 1717), pp. 17-18.

[2] C. Mather, Several Sermons Concerning Walking with God (Boston, 1689), p. 15.

[3] C. Mather, Utilia (Boston, 1716), p. 153.

> A Christian must not imagine, that when our Lord Jesus Christ came among us, the Sole design, or indeed the Chief design of His coming was to set us an Example . . . It has been a Satanic Stratagem, to press the Imitation of Christ, with an intent thereby, to draw off the minds of men from Faith in the Satisfaction and Propitiation, of Christ. That the Guiltiness of the First Adam, and the Righteousness of the Second Adam, is no otherwise ours than by Imitation, are two Damnable Haeresies . . . There are Incommunicable perfections of the Lord Jesus Christ, wherein a Christian may not propose to Imitate Him . . . In our Lord Jesus Christ, there is a Fullness of those Things, whereof the best of us can have but a Little.[1]

It is true, again, as Miller says, that Mather speaks of the delight which there is in satisfying the conscience.

> WHO can express the Sweet Quiet and ravishing Comfort of Soul, which a Life led in all Godliness and Honesty is attended withal! There is a Sweetness in the Work itself, such that the servants of CHRIST have thought their very Work to be their Wages. There is a Joyful Serenity of Soul, that flows in and from a Course of Obedience to GOD. A Conscience void of Offence toward GOD, and toward Man, how peaceable it is![2]

This may be individualistic, but it is piety, not moralism. It seems fairly clear that Miller has misread Mather in order to fit him into the familiar pattern of declension from spirituality into moralism which Joseph Haroutunian adopted in his study of Edwards and his successors.[3] But we can further establish Mather's distance from this kind of decay by studying his own comments on Enlightenment moralism.

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[1] C. Mather, Christianity to the Life (Boston, 1702), pp. 6, 10.

[2] C. Mather, Religious Societies (Boston, 1724), p. 6.

[3] J. Haroutunian, Piety Versus Moralism (New York, 1932).

The dominance of moralism in English church life, which Horton Davies brackets between the Act of Toleration and the early years of the Awakening, 1690-1850, was coterminous with most of Mather's career.[1] The main characteristic of Anglican preaching within this period, as Leslie Stephen points out, was a divorce between theology and morality, and a specialization in the latter,[2] with a quiet undercover rebuilding of the whole structure of religious life on theological foundations which were Deistic, Socinian, or Pelagian. We have already shown, in Chapter II, that Mather has a clear vision of the changes going on in the underlying theological strata, and will have nothing to do with these. But he is equally suspect of the surface morality being preached. Thus he faces the climatic change at Harvard with a grimace of distaste, and asserts the primacy of pure theology and spiritual experience over the new fads in ideas and morals.

> The *Languages* and the *Sciences* should be brought into a due subservience unto PIETY. What is not subservient, but rather inimical to the MAXIMS OF PIETY should be laid aside. And the common Ethicks especially thrown into the Rubbish. All *Academical Erudition* is but a splendid, and a noisy Ignorance; The Philosophy is but a Morosophy, which does not help to Restore fallen Man.[3]

Aiming at the popular moralism in England, he says,

> If *Satan* himself might come in person, & Preach unto a woful *World lying in wickedness*, doubtless he would say to them, ‘Sirs, Never puzzle and perplex your minds about such a Conversion as you hear some Stingy Ministers make a Noise about. Are you not *Christians*? Are you not *Baptized*? Are you not in *Charity with your Neighbours*? Don't you observe the Rules of *Morality*? This is enough! If they will call for *Conversion*, let 'em go tell their story to *Pagans*: You

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[1] Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England, 1690-1850* (Princeton, 1961).

[2] D. W. R. Bahlman, *The Moral Revolution of 1688* (New Haven, 1957), p. 78.

[3] C. Mather, *Malachi* (Boston, 1717), p. 63.

> that are Christians, are not concerned in the story . . . If once this Opinion be taken up, Never, Never! is any Conversion to be hoped for. The sinner is Nailed fast unto the Floor of Hell forever, when once this Nail is fastened into his Head.[1]

In Benedictus (1715), definitive essay on the nature of 'a good man' -- "The Best Thing that any Man can have Spoken of him!"[2] -- Mather smashes head-on into the Enlightenment concept of goodness.

> First; the Foundation must be Laid Low enough. The goodness of One who is a Good Man begins with a deep Apprehension of his Badness . . . 'Tis a Regeneration that makes a Good Man . . . Having dug this Low for the Foundation, we must then see to it that there be Rock in the Foundation. What I mean is, A Faith which brings us into Union with our SAVIOR . . . Our Savior has told us, Jn. 15:5, Without me you can do nothing.
>
> . . . .
>
> The Top and the crown of all will be found In a Profound Humility. A Good Man grown full of Goodness will then be Empty of Himself. He is Good, and he does Good, but at the same time he assumes the apostle's Motto, I am Nothing, and hence I am Good for nothing.[3]

The same theological substructure for morality -- repentance, regeneration, faith in Christ, the implantation of 'good principles' by the Holy Spirit -- is present in countless other sermons. In reality, Mather rarely mentions goodness without qualifying the term theologically and spiritually.

Perry Miller insists that all this is merely play-acting from a man who had secretly fallen in love with the current moralism, just as he interprets Edwards as a crypto-naturalist.[4] But Mather's theological and spiritual concerns are not artificial appendages tacked on to the substance of Bonifacius; the whole work is laid out to define a specifically

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[1] C. Mather, The Armour of Christianity (Boston, 1704), pp. 109-10.

[2] C. Mather, Benedictus (Boston, 1715), p. 1.

[3] Ibid., pp. 5-6, 16.

[4] Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), p. 413.

Christian activism on a supernatural basis. Believers are to do good "That the Great GOD and His CHRIST may be more Known and Serv'd in the World,"[1] and because the new nature inclines to the good.[2] Our first action must therefore be conversion to Christ.[3] Our first duty toward our family is to secure their regeneration,[4] and in doing good to neighbors we must above all consult their spiritual good.[5] One of the primary concerns for the neighborhood is the welfare of the religious societies, which are tested engines for spiritual revival.[6] And of course, the final section of the book, the duties of ministers, is almost an effort to meet the moralists on their own ground and wrestle them over unto Christian foundations. It certainly is an articulation of a post-theocratic strategy, as Miller mentions; but it is a deeply religious strategy and has little to do with morals or politics considered apart from Christ. It is simply one of the earliest formulations of a concept which is quite popular today: that the church is in the world not to dominate it, but to serve it, as agents of a servant Lord. It would not be hard to demonstrate that Mather's vision of this service is considerably better grounded in transmoral theological principles than much of our own activism. The Puritan/Pietist synthesis detested both a dead and inactive orthodoxy and a theologically empty moralism.[7] When the followers of the tradition decayed, the synthesis broke down into sterile orthodoxies and barren moralism. But one does not blame a living man for the decay products in his body when he has died.

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[1] C. Mather, Bonifacius (Boston, 1710), p. 19.

[2] Ibid., p. 23.

[3] Ibid., p. 36.

[4] Ibid., pp. 53 ff.

[5] Ibid., p. 77.

[6] Ibid., pp. 83 ff.

[7] D. W. Brown notes that both Puritans and Pietists distrusted the moralism which emerged in the late seventeenth century, and for identical reasons, ("The Problem of Subjectivism in Pietism" [unpublished doctoral thesis, Northwestern University, 1962], p. 234).

B. Legalism

If the goals of Mather's ethics are Christian rather than moralistic, the norms by which those goals are achieved are still very much open to criticism today, on the charge of legalism. There are at least two present common meanings of that epithet, and Mather is suspect in respect to both. The first refers to a soteriological system in which the standing of the individual with God is conditional on works rather than the apprehension of grace through faith. We have shown that Mather is clear that initial justification is wholly a matter of faith and grace, though the necessity of receiving an affective assurance slightly clouds the issue. Nevertheless, in reading Mather (and nearly any other Puritan) one has a disquieting sense of being haunted by the Law, of its having been reintroduced at some subsequent point in the believer's journey. And in fact it has been brought in again, in order to guard against the various forms of Antinomianism, and make sure the believer pays enough heed to legal sanctions to maintain the fear of the Lord, and remain on the track ethically. The Puritans, like the early Medieval pastors who introduced the confessional, were not entirely willing to trust Christians to live under grace.

The common Puritan belief that God would punish nations which were in covenant with him but involved in disobedience or apostasy, that "national sins deserve national judgments,"[1] is not exactly what is in view here. One cannot speak of a nation as being justified by faith. But Puritans carried over this theocratic concept of divine sanctions into God's dealings with the individual Christian. They rejected furiously the notion of penance -- Mather calls the separation between *reatus culpae* and *reatus poenae* "a vain distinction," and maintains that in justification both the punishment and the guilt of sin are remitted[1] -- and yet in practice they found that it seemed necessary for the ethical health of the community to brandish the penal rod occasionally. The difference, of course, was that what was threatened as the result of sin was not eternal death, but temporal loss. Here is Mather's late and considered utterance against the "antinomian" position as he saw it in contemporary English Christianity and in the Hutchinson affair:

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[1] Cf. D. W. R. Bahlman, The Moral Revolution of 1688 (New Haven, 1957), pp. 10, 42, 59.

> If in any Book, (tho' it should wear the Specious Title of, *Christ alone Exalted,*) you find such Passages, That *tho' a Believer doth Sin often, yet God no longer stands offended and displeased with him*; And, *that to tell Believers, that Except they walk Holily, God will be Angry with them, is to Abuse the Scriptures*; And, *That God never Punishes any Believers for their Sins*; Such a Book has a *Leprosy* upon it, for which it ought to be shut out from the *Camp* of the Congregation of the Lord.
>
> . . . .
>
> There is what we may call, a *Filial Guilt*, wherein a *Justified Person* may become liable to the *Fatherly Wrath* of a God who *will not have Pleasure in Wickedness*. . . . Men may be *Justified* for the *Life to come*, and yet by their Miscarriages come into such Ill Terms with Heaven, that they may in *this Life*, be Exposed to the Tremendous *Judgments* of God. Certainly, it becomes the believer to maintain this Temper and Terror, alwayes in his Mind; *O Lord, My Flesh trembles for Fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy Judgments*.
>
> . . . .
>
> Sirs, There *is* Poison in the *Box*, let what will be in the *Title*, when it shall be thence Insinuated into the Minds of them who profess themselves Believers, That there is *no fear of their being Hurt by, or for their Sins* . . . Will it be *no Hurt*, if the *Grieved Spirit* of God withdraw from you? . . . *No Hurt*, for Him to leave you in the Dark, without the joyful *Seals* and *Hopes* of your Salvation? *No Hurt*, for Him to grant a Permission, that Satan shall fall upon you, hurry you into fearful Disorders, distract you with Terrors, Persecute

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[1] C. Mather, *Speedy Repentance Urged* (Boston, 1690), p. 19.

> your souls, do horrible Things upon you?[1]

Mather does not hesitate to differ from the Reformers themselves in this matter:

> I wish, that the Renowned *Luther* himself had foreborn some Rhetorical, and Hyperbolical *Expressions*, which were indeed not unsuitable to his *Vehement Spirit*, but yet have given Occasion, unto some *Sects* of Men to run out into very Unjustifiable Extravagances . . . What a *Violent Sound* is there in his, *Fide homo sit Deus*! . . . Unto *Rash Expressions* I would annumerate all those, that have a tendency, to Extinguish that *Sorrow for Sin*, and to *Discourage* and Enfeeble that care to *Work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling*, which ought alwayes to be Cherished in the People of God. It is ill done, to Speak . . . as if *God could see no Sins in His people*, And *as if their Sins could never do them any Damage*; and, as if *the Elect could not ly under the Anger of God* . . . and, as if *nothing we do in Religion will conduce a jot unto any Good Ends* . . . Or, as if God were *never displeased with the Sins of believers*, *nor pleased with their Graces or Duties*. These are *Unsanctified Expressions*, and inimical to *Sanctity*.[2]

Mather notes the *Mollification* and *Irenic* which Witsius has written to explain such statements, but cannot understand why men use such expressions if they need such explanation after they have been spoken.[3]

Along with this general theological position with respect to antinomianism, there is a wealth of example within Mather's work of its outworking in a number of passages which have a very legal ring to them. For example, the 'doctrine' of *The Day, and the Work of the Day* is "That Prayer Be not Restrained, Fear Must Not Be Rejected," and the heading of the second section reads, "Devout Fear [is] the Spur of our Prayer".[4]

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[1] C. Mather, *Adversus Libertinos* (Boston, 1713), pp. 36-9. One summary of English antinomianism as seen by its critics identified its distinctive doctrines as follows: (1) That God never inflicts punishment for sins upon the elect; (2) That God is never angry with his children; (3) That he sees no sin in them; (4) That the elect are at all times beloved of God, even in the act of sin; (5) That sanctification, in duties of piety, is little esteemed by God. *Vide* Gertrude Heuhns, *Antinomianism in English History* (London, 1951), p.

[2] C. Mather, *Adversus Libertinos* (Boston, 1713), p. 48.

[3] *Ibid*.

[4] C. Mather, *The Day, and the Work of the Day* (Boston, 1693), p. 10.

Mather understands well that "the fear of God is an Old Testament expression, as the love of God is a New Testament one, for all true religion"[1] -- but the sermon on restraining prayer is a gun pointed at the heads of lazy families whose devotions are in ruins, and consequently its report has a threatening ring to it which belies all connotations of loving reverence in the word 'fear': "This *Fear* imports, *A dread of those Mischiefs that follow upon a Distance from God*."[2] It does not help much at this point to be told that this fear "Includes a *Love* to God, a *Faith* on God, a *Joy* in God as well as a *Fear* of Him."[3] In *Agricola* (1727), we are told that "When we have *Repented* of our *Errors*, there will be the *Harrow* of *Affliction*, oft drawn over us;"[4] and in the *Magnalia* Mather warns that parents may expect disasters to come upon their children because of old sins of uncleanness of which they have insufficiently repented.[5] He does not find the biblical example of David at all comforting in this respect, but only muses on the additional guilt David has incurred by emboldening countless others into uncleanness through the record of his sin with Bathsheba.[6] He is a firm believer in mortal sins -- that is, 'sins unto death,' which draw down upon themselves the ultimate temporal punishment.[7]

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[1] C. Mather, *Ornaments for the Daughters of Zion* (Cambridge, Mass., 1694), p. 23.

[2] C. Mather, *The Day, and the Work of the Day* (Boston, 1693), p. 22.

[3] *Ibid*.

[4] C. Mather, *Agricola* (Boston, 1727), p. 16.

[5] C. Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, II (Hartford, 1855), p. 398.

[6] *Ibid*., 494.

[7] C. Mather, *Seasonable Thoughts Upon Mortality* (Boston, 1712), p. 12. The distinction between mortal and venial sins was redefined and retained by Perkins, and even Baxter considered it quite important; *vide* Gordon Wakefield, *Puritan Devotion* (London, 1957), p. 113.

And yet on the other hand, there are occasions when Mather goes directly against the grain of this teaching when he is seeking to comfort bruised consciences. Though he constantly intimates that God will judge us openly in such a way as to intimate the nature of our provoking sin, -- that if, for example, we slander, we shall find ourselves slandered; and if a child goes wrong, we have cause to test our own past dealings with it -- Mather recognizes that there is something potentially dangerous in this counsel.

> There is one thing in the "judgments of God" whereof we should always be afraid; that is, lest we do make an injudicious interpretation of them. It is a caution given to us, in Psal. xxxvi. 6: "Thy judgments are a great deep, O Lord," and we should be very cautious, lest we drown our selves in such a *deep*, when we go to fathom it.[1]

> Some Things may have the *Appearance* of *Good Signs* upon them, which yet are not *Really* so. Some Things may to *Appearance* look like *Ill Signs*, and yet be *Tokens for Good*. Wherefore, when you Judge of *Signs*, beware of passing a *Rash Judgment* upon them.[2]

Speaking to those 'fainting under trials,' he denies the punitive nature of the misfortunes sent by Providence: "Our *Adversity* now comes, not so much to *Revenge* our Sins, as to *Reform* our Sins."[3] Passing on to his congregation the comforts which he has obtained from God in the aftermath of a series of deaths in his own family, he muses "Why the Holy God, will bring a *Night of Affliction* upon any of His Children? It is to give us Opportunity for our *Songs in the Night*."[4] He goes on to add, "*Our GOD LOVES us too well, to hurt us in the worst that He shall do unto us*."[5]

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[1] C. Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, II (Hartford, 1855), 383.

[2] C. Mather, *Menachem* (Boston, 1716), p. 10.

[3] C. Mather, *Hezekiah* (Boston, 1713), p. 7.

[4] C. Mather, *Meat out of the Eater* (Boston, 1703), p. 117.

[5] *Ibid*., p. 119.

While he never abandoned the legal emphasis which sought to motivate godliness by the fear of divine retribution, often in later years he moved out into the sunlight of evangelical gratitude, admitting that "'Tis impossible for Piety to have a greater Enkindler than this; a Persuasion of our share in the Love that our SAVIOR has unto His People."[1] In this context, adversity comes as gift and not as punishment, as

> . . . an Incentive to all PIETY. Whatever does advance our PIETY, brings with it the Love of our SAVIOR to us . . . A Soul, under the Force of this Persuasion, The Son of GOD has Loved me! What Heavenly Impressions will be always upon it! Such a Soul, how Tender will it be! How Easy will it be! How Ready for all Events! How Rejoicing always, with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory![2]

It seems, superficially, that there is a real divergence of opinion within Mather himself as to whether the storms of the Law are still needed in the culture of the renewed soul. It would be tempting for us to assume that Mather progresses toward a more evangelical position, gradually realizing that legal warnings often produce only a servile and formal external goodness still rooted in self-preserving anxiety, without reaching and extinguishing the roots of selfishness.[3] However, the sources do not indicate any definitive shift away from the older Puritan approach. Mather is again following out both sides of a rather delicate tension in the New Testament (for this is no simple matter of an inappropriate perspective on the Old Testament). Like the apostles themselves, to the trembling and essentially broken in heart, he holds out the comfort of God's continued love and accepting grace; while to the presumptuous and 'carnally secure,' he raises a voice of warning.

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[1] C. Mather, An Heavenly Life (Boston, 1719), p. 9.

[2] Ibid., pp. 19.

[3] Richard Baxter abhorred as a form of 'counterfeit holiness' the 'bondage of fear' produced by some forms of Puritanism; vide I Morgan, The Nonconformity of Richard Baxter (London, 1946), p. 97. Despite his affinity for most Puritan emphases, Francke shared the same caution about this matter, and urged ministers to explain often "the Difference betwixt a Legal and an Evangelical Frame and Principle of Religion; or betwixt that slavish Fear, by which alone it is that some Persons, even of a serious Turn of Mind, are forced and dragg'd as it were to their Duty,

The other sense in which the word legalism has been used in much recent literature dealing with situational ethics is one which no Protestant of Mather's period, except perhaps for a few on the antinomian left wing, would have recognized. It is that use which defines legalism as ethical guidance by biblical rules, issuing in the development of an involved casuistry.

Paralleling the development of dogmatic, natural-law casuistry in the Counter-Reformation, there was a wide growth of Protestant biblical casuistry, localized particularly in English Puritanism and Dutch precisianism. This was the product of a confluence of two streams: the approach to the Bible which treated the Bible as a codebook of law, tracing back to the Zwinglian Reformation in Zurich;[1] and the continued reliance on Medieval casuistry among Anglicans and Puritans alike (the contemporary Jesuit work on this line was spurned).[2] Perkins and Ames as the founders of Puritan casuistry, and Baxter in his Christian Directory (the summation of their work and the most widely influential

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and that Evangelical Newness of Spirit, that filial Love to God and Delight in his Service, which usually grows and flourishes in the Soul where it is once planted, and which produces a free, unconstrained and acceptable Religion" (vide A. H. Francke, A Letter Concerning the Most Useful Way of Preaching, tr. by David Jennings [London, 1725], p. 71).

[1] F. E. Stoeffler, The Rise of Evangelical Pietism (Leiden, 1965). p. 34.

[2] Cf. Wakefield, op. cit., p. 114. The Georges note that while most Reformed theology followed Calvin in exempting Christians from the Old Testament Law altogether, Perkins sought to hold a middle course, abolishing the Ceremonial Law but treating the Moral Law as normative; vide C. H. and K. George, The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation (Princeton, 1961), pp. 231, 238.

manual of its kind), took the earlier casuistry and sought to reground it upon authority which was strictly biblical in nature. Thomas Wood contends that Puritan 'cases of conscience' differed from their counterparts in Counter-Reformation moral theology because Puritan casuistry was seriously looking for the precise will of God in every situation, and not perpetually running interference for the bound human will, by searching for moral lowest common denominators.[1] The importance of casuistry for Puritans as an instrument for godliness is indicated by William Ames' opinion that it was exactly what was needed to prod the stolid orthodoxy in Holland into a state of revival.[2]

We have already alluded to Mather's fondness for the casuistry of the early fathers, and especially that of Origen, who is in a sense the godfather of Puritan legalism. Mather is just as fascinated by rules for right living as he is by rules of devotional growth, and urges his hearers to "govern the little that remains of your Lives by the Rules of Him that is from the Beginning."[3] He is even able to sum up all religion in this rather infelicitous word: "To yield Obedience unto God, in the Ways and Rules of His Holy Religion; This is to be, WISE unto salvation."[4] The primary source of these rules is, of course, the scripture.

> The Almighty God has given His Commandments unto us, as the Everlasting and Unrepealable & Unalterable Rule, in our Observation whereof, He will be Glorified. For to speak as if God had Abrogated, and Abolished, yea, or Abated, that Eternal Rule of our Glorifying Him,

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[1] Thomas Wood, English Casuistical Divinity during the Seventeenth Century (London, 1952), p. 64.

[2] Matthew Nethenus, "Introductory Preface," in William Ames, ed. and tr. by Douglas Horton (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), p. 15.

[3] C. Mather, Addresses to Old Men, and Young Men, and Little Children (Boston, 1690), p. 32.

[4] C. Mather, Corderius Americanus (Boston, 1708), p. 4.

> is indeed the truest Antinomianism.[1]

Mather entirely identifies the fulfilment of biblical commands with ethical completeness:

> Good Works are found in Sincere Essayes of Obedience to the Law of the Holy God. . . . If our Works do in any point fall short of that Rule, they are not perfectly Good.
>
> . . . .
>
> It is requisite that this be what is Required in the Law of God; or, According to His Will. . . . No Works are Good, but such as are Contained in the Two Tables of the Ten Commandments.[2]

The last clause here is an application to the whole of ethics of Puritan divine-right legalism in the sphere of worship. Any position which is softer than this he denounces as antinomian.

The Puritan legal approach to ethics is of course most famous for its legislation on apparently indifferent (or at least debatable) matters in the spheres of dress, mores, and recreation. What the Puritans did in this realm was simply to take a mass of scruples from the early fathers, which Medieval Christianity had domesticated by transforming into 'counsels of perfection,' and let them loose again upon the laity, by establishing them as norms of ordinary Christian living. From the early 18th century on there was a ferocious reaction against this among disgruntled secular spokesmen of English culture, although Anglican churchmen did not dare lose face morally by taking lower ground, and adopted the alternate strategy of attacking the Puritans for Calvinistic indifference to the moral behavior of the elect.[1]

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[1] C. Mather, Christianity to the Life (Boston, 1702), p. 12.

[2] C. Mather, Tabitha Rediviva (Boston, 1713), pp. 6, 8. Several of Mather's other tracts are basically expositions of the Decalogue, sometimes combined with extracts from the civil law of Massachusetts; vide Epistle to the Christian Indians (Boston, 1700); The Hatchets to Hew Down the Tree of Sin (Boston, 1705).

Mather is a full advocate of Puritan 'precision.' The good Christian must be 'singular,' he says, both because of the extreme depravity of the surrounding non-Christian world, and because the scriptures command the believer to be 'peculiar' (I Peter 2:9).[1] In choosing which side to take on some practice which is in question, he advises abstaining even from practices which might be lawful, because they may be "Snares in Lawful Things."[2] And then, of course, the consistent disciple "will even abridge himself of some stumbling-blocks to a fellow-Christian."[3] Thus Mather does recognize that there is such a thing as 'Christian liberty.' How he defines this, however, is so mysterious as to cast a shadow over the whole realm of 'adiaphora':

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[1] Cf. C. H. and K. George, op. cit., p. 53; and cf. W. P. Holden, Anti-Puritan Satire, 1572-1642 (New Haven, 1954). F. E. Stoeffler observes that Perkins' theology took the Rhenish strain of continental Reformed thought and transformed it into a piety of legal observances in daily life, called 'godliness' by its adherents, and 'preciseness' by its opponents (vide Stoeffler, op. cit., p. 58). McNeill feels that this modification was due to Patristic influence, and that it was really a moderate effort which criticized the fathers, and yet accepted their highest standards (J. T. McNeill, Modern Christian Movements [Philadelphia, 1954], p. 264). Subsequent Puritans varied on the strictness with which they stuck to the guidelines of their precisionism; Mather's grandfather Cotton, for instance, was quite mild on the subject (vide Larzer Ziff, The Career of John Cotton [Princeton, 1962], p. 162). Baxter was also moderate (vide H. Martin, Puritanism and Richard Baxter [London, 1954], pp. 95-8), and Doddridge, at the beginning of the 18th century, was extremely casual about legal minutiae (vide G. F. Nutall, Philip Doddridge, 1702-51 [London, 1951], p. 111). The Continental Pietists, under Puritan influence, moved in the opposite direction, however. While Teelinck concentrated more on inner development and less on legal forms, Ames, Lodensteyn, Voet and Cocceius were quite strict (Stoeffler, op. cit., p. 141). Spener noted that one of the things which should characterize true Pietists was a willingness to give up their Christian freedom in some minor matters, but was generally lenient, merely indicating that some forms of art and activity had been corrupted, though they were not intrinsically wrong (vide Stoeffler, op. cit., p. 58). Deppermann finds in Spener a shallow and exterior definition of sin which would lead to legalism in his successors; I suspect here that he is relying on earlier, less objective scholarship, since he differs from most later authorities in finding Spener himself to be a legalist. (Vide K. Deppermann, Der Hallische Pietismus . . . [Göttingen, 1961], p. 37). Francke and the early Halle, however, were much more -- perhaps more so than many Puritans (vide D. W. Brown, op. Cit., pp. 269-73). Peschke remarks: "Von diesen Voraussetzungen aus kommt Francke zur Ablehnung jeder Neutralität. Es gibt kein indiferenten Dinge." (Vide E. Peschke, Studien zur Theologie August Hermann Franckes, I [Berlin, 1964], p. 92). Francke concluded that the common orthodox "allamodischen Christenthum" was willing to go along with political necessity in condemning gross sin which threatened the life of the community, but was too cowardly to attack refinements such as cursing, alcoholism, prostitution, the dance and the theater, because the wealthy nobility engaged in these and profited from them. He complained of "Theologische prudentz und Schlangen-Klugheit ohne die Tauben-Einfalt," and claimed that "Man will jedermann zum Freunde haben und niemanden sich gerne zum Feinde machen . . . Man verkündigt einen falschen Christum und macht den Weg zum Himmel breit." (Vide Peschke, op. cit., pp. 92, 121-2, 138.) Some schools

> 'Tis a thing of an Ungodly aspect, for Men, from such Liberties as are Lawful Ones, to Encourage themselves in taking such as are Unlawful Ones. There are Great Liberties which the Grace of God has granted unto Christians; Especially now the Mosaic Yoke is taken off, by the Grace of a more Evangelical Dispensation. But what, says the Law of CHRIST, I Cor. 8:9 But take heed, lest by any means this Liberty of yours become a Stumbling Block to the weak, . . . Mind this; When things are so Indifferent, that there is no Necessity of then, and no Commandment of God obliges to them, we should think; Tis true, I say do this thing; But won't my doing of it, cause other People to Sin against my Savior? . . . It is a holy saying, Omnia libera per fidem serva, per charitatem.[4]

The "Mosaic yoke" from which we are now released is apparently limited by Mather to the ceremonial law of the Old Testament. However he feels no compunction against the elaboration of a whole new legal

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of later Pietism, however, such as the healthy and moderate Würtemmburg group represented by Bengel, were more balanced. (Vide J. T. McNeill, op. cit., p. 69). Stoeffler, Deppermann, and Beyreuther comment, however, that the legalistic reaction of most Pietists was entirely understandable in view of the corrosive moral drift of the early eighteenth century; and Stoeffler observes that a legal response was, as yet, the only kind that Christians historically had known how to give. He adds, correctly, that "legalism is now and ever the greatest temptation of Pietists." (Vide Stoeffler, op. cit., pp. 22,77; Deppermann, op. cit., p. 56; E. Beyreuther, August Hermann Francke, Zeuge des Lebendigen Gottes 2te Aufl., Marburg, 1961 , p. 124).

[1] C. Mather, A Good Character (Boston, 1723), p. 15.

[2] C. Mather, The Wayes and Joyes of Early Piety (Boston, 1712), p. 44.

[3] C. Mather, The Pourtraiture of a Good Man (Boston, 1702), p. 12.

[4] C. Mather, Grace Defended (Boston, 1712), pp. 12-13.

apparatus of 'clean and unclean practices' through the employment of casuistry. Among these there are three matters which are subjects of absolute prohibition: dancing, the theater, and gambling. Mather does not have very many references to 'promiscuous dancing' -- especially after 1700, when the case against dancing-masters in Boston society was pretty well lost -- but in two sermons he lashes this practice vigorously, supported by an army of authorities summoned up out of every party in the church's history. In *A Cloud of Witnesses* (1700) and *Ornaments for the Daughters of Zion* (1694) he refers not only to the Westminster *Larger Catechism* under the treatment of the seventh commandment, but also to the fathers (Chyrsostom, Ambrose, Augustine); virtuous pagans (Scipio Africanus, Salust, Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch); Reformed councils in France, Poland, and Holland (the Synod of Dort); Church of England divines (Downham, Babington, Andrewes, Usher); and even a few "papists."[1] His appeal to scripture is limited to the implications of its general teaching on chastity, and a dubious exegesis of several biblical texts.[2] The most that Mather will allow to dancing masters is that they might profitably be re-employed to teach cultivated manners.[3] In the same breath that he condemns dancing, he indites the theater also as another school of lust, forbidden by the *Larger Catechism*[4] and condemned by the best Patristic authorities:

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[1] C. Mather, *A Cloud of Witnesses* (Boston, 1700), *passim*: and *Ornaments for the Daughters of Zion* (Cambridge, Mass., 1694), pp. 18 ff.

[2] Mather says that most authorities define the word κόμος in I Peter 4:3 and Romans 13:13 as *dancing*. The *Greek-English Lexicon* of W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich (Chicago, 1957), lists *excessive feasting*, *carousing*, and *revelry* as acceptable definitions.

[3] C. Mather, *A Cloud of Witnesses* (Boston, 1700), p. 1.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 2.

> They [the fathers] Shunned the *Stage-Plays*, and every thing that had any Tendency to *Unchastity*, you would admire to see how zealously 'tis decried in the Writings of the Ancients! If they thought, it would more accomodate them with opportunities to glorify God, *Justin Martyr* mentions it as a Triumph of Christianity, that they made nothing of even declining an allowable and honorable *Marriage* in all their days. . . . It is well known, That such was their Abhorrence of *Unchastity*, the Devil took advantage from it: the *due Honour of the Married State* was impaired by it: it made way for Popery and Monkery.[1]

Mather shows no glimmer here of a suspicion that 'popery and monkery' -- in the form of non-biblical ascetic influences -- might also be involved in the fathers' wholesale condemnation of drama and the dance. In the case of the theater, Puritans were convinced that there is no *right* way of handling the drama from a Christian standpoint, because of the origin of this art-form in the worship ceremonies of the Greek idolators. In a somewhat similar way, cards, dice, and other games of chance were forbidden not so much because of the social dangers of gambling, but because of a theological reason: they make a mockery of the sacred use of 'the lot,' and they violate the concept of divine Providence, either by bringing in a pagan concept of 'fortune,' or by recognizing God's control over the dice, but involving his activity in an essentially trivial affair.[2]

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[1] C. Mather, *The Good Old Way* (Boston, 1706), p. 17.

[2] C. Mather, *A Good Master Well Served* (Boston, 1696), p. 50. The prohibitions against dancing and the theater appear among a minority in the earliest beginnings of the Puritan movement (1559-1565) (cf. H. C. Porter, *Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge* [Cambridge, England, 1958], p. 114), but are normative among all Puritans from the time of Perkins (*vide* Wakefield, op. cit., p. 131), although some individuals within the movement (e.g. Milton and Cromwell) did not object to these (*vide* Horton Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans* [Westminster, 1948], p. 272). As Mather indicates, a number of Anglicans also condemned dancing and stage plays, including Jeremy Collier and William Law (cf. J. T. McNeill, *Modern Christian Movements* [Philadelphia, 1954], p. 46). Baxter is typically cautious, allowing that stage plays may in some

There are a number of other items which Mather considers lawful, but subject to very careful control and moderation. In the matter of apparel, it is well-known that he found nothing inconsistent in his following the current fashion and wearing a wig, to Judge Sewall's intense disgust.[1] But in most cases he carried on the Puritan tradition of severe modesty in clothing, especially female clothing.

> Indeed the early Christians declined, they avoided, an *Affected Singularity* in their *Apparel*; they complied with the *Decent Fasions* of the Times and Places where they lived. *Justin Martyr* says this expressly concerning them; that *They differ not from others in the innocent customs of the civil life*; and *they were not Fantastical nor Affectatious, but in outward Things they usually lived according to the manners of their Country* . . . Nevertheless, tis very sure the *Primitive Christians* were careful to Steer clear of Excessive conformity to the *Pomps of the World* in their *Apparel*.
>
> . . . .
>
> When they saw *Paintings* and *Patches*, they cried out, *Is this to glorify the Lord with your Bodies, as you ought to do*! When they saw a Criminal *Gaudiness*, they cried out, that it made them think of a *certain* Woman in the *Revelation*![2]

> Now this is One Argument which the *vertuous woman* has against the *Painting* of her face or any part of it; *It is the Guise of an harlot*. An *Adulterate* Complexion, is but agreeable to an *Adulterous* Condition. A *Painted Face* is but a *Painted sign* hung out for advice to Strangers, that they shall find Entertainment there. Tis often the *Whours Forhead* which admits *Paint* upon it. Tis well, if you don't find a *Snake*, where you see a Painted Skin! . . . And alas, what a World of Time, is thus thrown away, by poor Creatures, who are so taken up with *Painting* of the *Sepulchres* in which their *Souls* ly *Dead*; as that they do Little or Nothing for the Beautifying of those *Black*, Forlorn, Forsaken souls![3]

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instance be lawful (*vide* Hugh Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 95), but that in most cases they are not fit even to be read (*vide* McNeill, *op. cit.*, p. 46). Among the Continental Pietists, Francke moved beyong the cautious tolerance of Spener to condemn theater and the dance unreservedly (*vide* A. W. Nagler, Pietism and Methodism [Nashville, 1918], p. 68), along with card-playing and (according to McNeill, *op. cit.*, p. 64) all forms of children's play.

[1] O. E. Winslow, *Meetinghouse Hill*, 1630-1783 (New York, 1952), p. 109.

[2] C. Mather, *The Good Old Way* (Boston, 1706), pp. 19, 21.

[3] C. Mather, *Ornaments for the Daughters of Zion* (Cambridge, Mass., 1694), pp. 20-21.

There must be also careful self-control in monitoring one's own literary diet, for "Play-books, and Jest-books, and Novels, and Romances, the Volumns of Satans Library, will be none of the best Companions for you . . . or Your Appetite for the Bible will be notoriously palled; You will be siezed with a sort of Loathing for the Manna of Heaven."[1] In one's own family and with respect to the household servants this control may go so far as an actual censorship of reading material.[2] Similarly, Mather advises the Christian to "avoid ill companions" just as he shuns corrupting literature.[3]

With regard to those shibboleths of the post-Finneyan revivalist tradition, smoking and drinking, Mather is, like most Puritans, cautious but moderate. He considers the use of tobacco a lawful thing,[4] but one in which the Christian should be "Excessively Moderate."[5] He is tolerant of a controlled use of alcoholic beverages, for "the Great Basil; very justly declares, That we cannot exactly prescribe unto all men, just what they shall Eat or Drink, because of their very different Constitutions."[6]

> I would be so understood, that the ABUSE and EXCESS of the Liquor is all that is complained of. It is a Creature of God, that comes into the Charter, that we have in the first Epistle to Timothy . . . It is good, and not be refused, if it be received with Thanksgiving. One way of spoiling a Reformation is by Overdoing . . . Men may receive with Thanksgiving such Refreshments as the Compassion of Heaven has provided for them. Only, let them do nothing that is contrary to Thanksgiving . . . Certainly, Men don't

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[1] C. Mather, Man Eating the Food of Angels (Boston, 1710), pp. 27-8.

[2] C. Mather, A Good Master Well Served (Boston, 1696), p. 48.

[3] C. Mather, The Wayes and Joyes of Early Piety (Boston, 1712), p. 48.

[4] C. Mather, Nunc Dimitis (Boston, 1709), pp. 34-5.

[5] C. Mather, Manuductio ad Ministerium (Boston, 1726), p. 134.

[6] C. Mather, The Good Old Way (Boston, 1706), pp. 12-13.

Express their *Thankfulness* to God when they Debauch themselves.[1] But he adjures the practice of drinking healths,[2] along with all indulgence which leads to actual drunkenness, for "the *High Feeding*, and the *Hard Drinking*, so common among the *Christians* of our Dayes, is fearfully condemned by the *Rules* of the *Christian Religion*."[3] Elsewhere he comments that "it may be, God will sooner give the country to *Papists*, than let it be possessed by a Generation of *Drunken Protestants*.[4] Mather is opposed not only to the loss of control of conscience involved in drunkenness but to the building up of unbreakable habits of drinking:

> Not just drinking to excess, but sipping by bits and bits in condemned . . . They get into the way of it, ever now and then, to be *Sipping* at it. The Custom insensibly grows upon them. They come to *Crave* after it; such a Craving they have, that they cannot go without it. They are never *Drunk*; tis true, But they become Enslaved unto the Bottle of Drink. It would be a sad thing, if any *Child* of God should be overtaken with such a *Slavery*. God will first or last make him shed a *Bottle of Tears*, for so *defiling* a *Temple* of His![5]

While Mather is not utterly set against the use of taverns, but he is concerned that they be run with what might even be called 'Christian responsibility': "Will you hear it, O ye Keepers of *Taverns*? The *Money* which you get by Selling of Drink, to People that you plainly see have already drank enough, that *Money* is not *Honest Gain*."[6] Mather became increasingly alarmed by the social consequences of the West Indian rum trade, which led him in 1708 to utter a vigorous blast against hard liquor, appropriately called *Sober Considerations*. "Rhum," he says, is "a flood out of the dragon's mouth," since it wounds the soul, causes mental deterioration, brings poverty, destroys the family, and breaks down the whole fabric of society.[1] Mather is especially concerned because the drinksellers are peddling the liquor to the Indians, who, as he notes, are especially subject to a destructive addiction to it: "*Satan* had a *Strong Hold* of these doleful Tawnies before, but by the Drunkenness . . . there is no small *Strength* added . . . The worst thing . . . is it indisposes the Indians to the gospel."[2] Facing this, Mather begins to sound a little more like a nineteenth century 'temperance' crusader:

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[1] C. Mather, *Sober Considerations* (Boston, 1708), p. 5.

[2] C. Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, I (Hartford, 1855), 128.

[3] C. Mather, *The Good Old Way* (Boston, 1706), p. 12.

[4] C. Mather, *Sober Considerations* (Boston, 1708), p. 17.

[5] *Ibid*., p. 11.

[6] C. Mather, *Lex Mercatoria* (Boston, 1705), p. 20.

> A branch of the *River of Death* is turning in upon us . . . But, after what a *Contemptible Manner*, does our Grand Adversary propose to Ruin us, that a liquor of so diminutive, so dishonorable, so disreputable a Character, that a Minister even blushes to mention the *Name* of it, should be the *Instrument* of the Ruin! . . . We find the *Romish-Babylon* charged with making the *Inhabitants of the Earth, drunk with the Wine of her Fornication.* 'Tis remarkable; *Truth* is compared unto *Water*, it inclines them that hold it, unto Coolness, Meekness, Gentleness, and a courteous Toleration. *Error* is compared unto Strong Drink; as it inebriates men, so it *intoxicates* 'em; and makes 'em *Fierce*, Impatient of *Contradictions*, Implacable in *Persecution*.[3]

And yet Mather is not a prohibitionist or even a total abstinence man:

> I should *Overdo*, if I should say, let it not be brought into the Country; or, Let no body taste a drop of it, if it be here. Tho' I am sufficiently a stranger to the use of it, my self; yet I can readily yet allow, its being of a manifold use, both as a *Medicine*, and a *Cordial*.
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> . . . .
>
> [But] Methinks All People of the better Quality, should in their own *Practice*, Abstain from the *Sordid Liquor*.[4]

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[1] C. Mather, *Sober Considerations* (Boston, 1708), *passim*.

[2] C. Mather, A Monitory and Hortatory Letter (Boston, 1700), pp. 8, 10.

[3] C. Mather, *Sober Considerations* (Boston, 1708), p. 3.

[4] *Ibid*., pp. 5, 18.

But the very integrity of the Puritan biblicistic legalism kept Mather from the later excesses of nineteenth-century Revivalism, which extended the list of forbidden adiaphora to cover all forms of alcohol, tobacco, and even (in Finney's case) coffee and tea. We must remember that in their biblical casuistry, the Puritans were not just searching for points of behavior in which a Christian could be 'separate' from the world and marked out as different: they were searching for biblical norms of behavior which would preserve Christians from the contemporary cultural decay. Later generations retained all of their strictures, quite often forgetting the real theological rationales behind then, and added new ones to produce a taboo-morality very similar to the laws of ceremonial cleanness which were Israel's training-school to a higher morality. Mather would have been aghast, as Hodge was, at the 'temperance' movement's substitution of grape-juice for the wine of the Lord's Supper, because this measure violated biblical casuistry, and 'improved upon the wisdom of the Bible by the introduction of a chain of human reasonings derived from current social need.

While the Puritan reliance on the Bible for codebook morality was based on a questionable theological rationale, it was also part of an effort to avoid a totally 'enthusiastic' solution to the problem of moral guidance. The Puritans were horrified at 'Antinomian" and Quaker approaches to the problem of ethical guidance, in part because they were reminiscent of the excesses of Continental Anabaptism in the last century, but also because they introduced a wholly unguarded subjectivism in the ethical sphere which could lead directly into dangerous fanaticism. Searching for a median position which would not involve a recourse to church authority in moral decisions, the Puritans forged a delicate balance between the Spirit and the Word, equally rejecting a dead legalism without the Spirit, and a fanatical enthusiasm, lacking the restraint of the Word. They would probably regard our contemporary attempts at situational ethics as a total relapse into the Quaker position, sharing its distrust of the written word and opening the way for all kinds of sublimated selfishness masquerading successfully as 'love' because of the want of any biblical checks and balances. They themselves found the Law to be of continued usefulness to Christians, both as a stimulus to spiritual growth -- for the regenerate Christian experienced its continued use by the Spirit to search out the unconverted places in his life and bring these to the light of grace for transformation -- and also for guidance, since the Law was considered to be the perfect form of love, expressing its normative content in every situation. Love merely fulfilled the Law; it neither transcended nor deviated from it in any case. The possibility of another form of Spirit/Word balance, in which, not rules, but New Testament principles of ethics could be freely applied and adapted by the Spirit to specific situations, did not occur to Mather's Puritanism or Francke's Pietism. But this is only symptomatic of a further ethical defect in the Puritan system of sanctification: the fragmentation of communion with God, in which a continued following of the written Word administered by the conscience is assumed, in place of an ethical life directly mediated by continuous personal contact with the Holy Spirit.

5. Communion with God and Sanctification

In any attempt at a biblical theory of sanctification, the problem of the transformation of life and the subsequent guidance of that life come to a focus in the crucial problem of the individual's communion with

God, the restoration of which is one of the primary goals of redemption. At the close of this chapter it is appropriate to examine Mather's development of the subject of contact with God.

A. *The Ascent to Mystical Ecstasy*

Although the sturdy logical skeletons of Puritan sermons have convinced some critics that Puritans were only interested in theology and had no element of ecstasy in their makeup,[1] they were in fact supremely interested in the experience of communion with God. The seventeenth-century Puritans acknowledged some kinship with the Catholic 'Mistical Divines' who kept alive spiritual religion in the midst of Papal darkness.[2] The connection is even more clearly visible in the Continental Pietists, who inherited from Johann Arndt a mystical emphasis conditioned and modified by the thought of Luther. Francke defined the goal of the Christian life as *arctissima conjunctio cum deo*,[3] to be reached in the process of prayer, and referred to his own thinking as a true *Theologia Mystica, praxis Christianismi interioris*.[4]

There are, however, distinct differences between Puritan and Pietist mysticism and normative Catholic mysticism. Augustine, and later Medieval mystics, conceived of union with God as the product of a long process of ascent, in which the soul was gradually purified of carnal and sensual components and made fit for the visio Dei. In the high Middle Ages this process was codified by Bonaventura into a standard 'triple way' consisting of successive purgative, illuminative, and unitive stages, accomplished by meditation, prayer, and contemplation.[1] While there are slight traces of the triple way in a few men associated with Puritanism -- I. Morgan finds evidence of it in the early Elizabethan Puritans,[2] and Stoeffler detects it in Bishop Hall[3] -- the main stream of Puritan thinking, in its treatment of sanctification, either abandoned the three stages or else reversed the order of them, beginning with the unio Christi as a basis for spiritual growth and proceeding through the illumination of faith to the mortification of sin.[4] It might, of course, be argued that in its concept of initial justification and regeneration Puritanism has simply reintroduced the triple way in a very condensed form, leading up not to mystical contemplation but to assurance of salvation. But even if this is not the case, in its development of the concept of communion with God, subsequent to regeneration, Puritanism tended to carry over the mystical concept of communion with God as a 'mountain-top experience' which had to be achieved by hard human labor, by ascending to God through meditation and prolonged prayer undertaken by the individual in comparative isolation from the world. It is true that the pilgrim begins at the foot of the mountain as a justified sinner forgiven by God -- he is not working his way up to forgiveness, in the pre-Reformation pattern. But he is working his way up toward communion with God -- realizing, of course, just as the Medieval mystics did, that his 'acquired contemplation' may not finally be graced with the sovereign gift of infused contemplation, sensible contact with God. Thus Stoeffler[1] and Flew[2] are only partially correct when they state that Puritanism involved a reversal of the union-by-ascent pattern of Medieval mysticism. This is to make the Puritans out as more consistently Reformed than they were in practice.

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[1] K. B. Murdock, *Literature and Theology in Colonial New England* (Cambridge, Mass., 1949), p. 52.

[2] Gordon S. Wakefield, *Puritan Devotion* (London, 1957), p. 102.

[3] R. Newton Flew, *The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology* (Londin, 1934), p. 277.

[4] E. Peschke, *Studien zur Theologie August Hermann Franckes*, I (Berlin, 1964), 113. Francke expressly states that in the hidden times before the Reformation true Christianity was among the mystics, in their rejection of ceremonies, and *ex opere operato* concept of sacraments, and scholastic theology, citing Tauler and Ruysbroek; and he comments on Arndt's fusion of mysticism and Lutheran doctrine. *Vide* E. Peschke, *Studien zur Theologie August Hermann Franckes*, I (Berlin, 1964), 113.

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[1] P. Pourrat, Christian Spirituality, tr. by W. H. Mitchell and S. P. Jacques, I (London, 1922), 209; II (Westminster, Md., 1953), 177.

[2] I. Morgan, The Godly Preachers of the Elizabethan Church (London, 1965), p. 116.

[3] F. E. Stoeffler, The Rise of Evangelical Pietism (Leiden, 1965), p. 83.

[4] Cf. Wakefield, op. cit., pp. 102, 160. Despite his sympathy for certain pre-Reformation figures, Spener was more evangelical than mystical in basic temperament, and Francke warned against indiscriminate allegiance to the theory and practice of pur Medieval mysticism (Peschke, op. cit., p. 110). Franz Hildebrandt correctly observes concerning Luther that "The further recent research has gone . . . the clearer it has become that the decisive moment is not the kindship, but the break with the mystics," and this is equally true of Arndt, Spener and Francke, contrary to Ritschl and Hildebrandt's own interpretation (F. Hildebrandt, From Luther to Wesley London, 1951 , pp. 101-2).

The hours Mather spent in secret prayer indicate that he shared the Medieval concept of communion with God as best developed in isolation, in a condition of 'retreat' from the world. He tells the older laymen that they are fortunate, since "'tis Convenient that you should now Retreat and Retire from the Business of the World, that the best part of your Time should be taken up in Serious Devotions."[3] Although this is out of accord with the common image of Mather as a frenetic activist -- and also with our own current activism, which almost rules out the possibility that God could be anywhere except 'where the action is' -- the procedure did in many instances lead Mather into a sense of communion with God which approximated mystical ecstasy.

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[1] Stoeffler, op. cit., p. 15.

[2] Flew, op. cit., p. 167.

[3] C. Mather, Addresses to Old Men, and Young Men, and Little Children (Boston, 1690), p. 43.

> The joy of an heavenly world, a little of it breaking into the mind of the believer, while it is yet on this side of Heaven, O, it ravishes him! It amazes him! It even overcomes him! He is not able to subsist under it. It is insupportable. It makes him cry out, Lord, stay thy hand! If the joy be so exuberant, when a little of it here enters the soul, what will thy joy be, O faithful servant, when thou shalt enter into the joy of thy Lord![1]

Mather thus agrees with most Catholic mystics that mystical experience involves a certain wear and tear on the psyche and the physical health of the subject.[2] He also concurs with the older mystical tradition in describing the experience itself as literally unreportable -- either because (as Paul says of his own ecstasy)[3] it is unlawful to do so, or because the experience cannot be precisely recalled or put into human language.[4]

> *What is that Fulness of God?* . . . This *filling*, truly it is a thing better *felt* than *spoke* . . . It is one of the *unutterable things*, yea, it is one of the *unfathomable things* . . . We may say as in I Cor. 2:9, *Eye hath not seen it, nor Ear heard it* . . . Not accurate Scholarship, but *experimental Christianity* alone will help us to conceive of these things.[5]

It is these joys which in Mather's mind more than compensate for the ascetic discipline of Puritanism.

> The Great God has more Sublime, Celestial, Rapturous *Consolations* for us, than any of this World; Ah, my Young People; when you have thought, that the ways of *Religion* were Severe, Austere, Morose and *Melancholy* ways; That you must never See a *cheerful* Minute more, after you become *Seriously* Religious; It was a *Lying Devil* which told you so.[6]

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[1] C. Mather, *Agricola* (Boston, 1727), p. 206.

[2] Pourrat, *op. cit.*, II (Westminster, Md., 1953), 91; cf. C. Mather, *Diary*, I (New York, 1957), 278 (November, 1698), 483 (May, 1703).

[3] II Corinthians 12:4.

[4] Pourrat, *op. cit.*, I (London, 1922), 214; cf. C. Mather, *Diary*, I (New York, 1957), 278 (November, 1698), 483 (May, 1703); II (New York, 1957), 578 (January, 1718/19).

[5] C. Mather, *Batteries upon the Kingdom of the Devil* (London, 1695), p. 175.

[6] C. Mather, *Nehemiah* (Boston, 1710), pp. 3, 5.

> Let a Man be full of God, and that's the way for him to be *full of Joy*. God is *Light*, God is *Life*: When God comes into any Soul, He most effectually saith, *Peace be unto this Soul*. The Man that has much of God in him, cannot be without much of *Peace* and *Joy* . . . Such Raptures of *Joy* do sometimes fill the Soul of such a Man, that he is ready to swoon and faint under them; he is forced to cry out, *Lord, it is enough*. O *stay thy hand, I can bear no more! Now I know that God is my only God, and that He will bless me for evermore*. No doubt some in this Assembly have had such Transports of Joy, when under the *plenitude* of the *Almighty*.[1]

The center of delight on all these experiences is the vision of God Himself, conveyed by the illumination of the Holy Spirit:

> There are *Delightful Enjoyments* of the Blessed God . . . when His *Glory* appears unto us, glitters before us . . . That we may have the fuller View of the Glorious God, and these things, His *good Spirit* . . . gives us strength, through our *faculty* to discern the Glory of that Object *which no man hath seen at any time, or indeed can see* . . . We have a privilege; Eph. 1:18, *The eyes of your understanding being enlightened* . . . *Happy, Happy, O Glorious One, Happy are thy Servants, who stand before thee, and see thy Glory!* That Problem, What, *and where His Blessedness*; can have none but that Solution; Matt. 5:8, *Blessed are they that see God* . . . *Truly the Light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the Eyes to behold the Sun!* But how *sweet* is it then . . . for our *Eyes* to behold Him who made the Sun, who is the *Father of Lights*, and before whom the *Sun* itself is but a Lump of *Darkness*! A *Mathematical Demonstration*; So *Delightful* it is unto the Students of the Mathematics, that they are even transported with it. But what then is the *Contemplation*, of the Blessed GOD, when He causes *His Goodness, and His glory* to pass before us![2]

There is a strong flavor here of the *amor intellectualis dei* native to Platonic mysticism.

Mather's diaries testify to the fact that throughout his career he spoke from experience in commending such flights of communion with God. Here is an entry from the earliest recorded year of Mather's diary, when he was only eighteen, at the close of a day of prayer:

> I earnestly sought unto the Lord, that before the Day were done, Hee would manifest of His *Love* unto mee, with some yett more effectual Intimations. And behold! Immediately after this, as I was then

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[1] C. Mather, *Batteries upon the Kingdom of the Devil* (London, 1695), p. 189.

[2] C. Mather, *Utilia* (Boston, 1716), p. 67.

> sitting in my Chair, the Lord brought unto mee that Scripture, In Joh. 14:23. *Jesus said, if a man love mee, He will keep my Words, and my Father will love Him, and wee will come to him, and make our Abode with him.* My Heart was even dissolved upon the Reading of these Words. I said, *Oh! I feel! I feel! I feel! I love the Lord Jesus Christ; I love Him dearly, I love Him greatly, yea, I love Him above all. And what? Will God love mee, and will my Lord come to dwell with mee? Oh! Joy unspeakable and full of glory!*[1]

Note the distinctively Protestant quality of this mystical experience: it arises out of, and fulfills, a basic desire for personal assurance of salvation and God's favor toward the individual; and it is centered on the illumination of a biblical text, in which this becomes suddenly transparent so that Mather's vision pierces beyond it to the divine realities it signifies. The 'feeling'involved is not so much an 'emotional' surge in the usual sense, but the sudden exercise of a hidden faculty of the soul, in which a direct experience of God's presence is intuitively known and there is an entrance into that atmosphere of joy which is God's own eternal happiness.

Nearly all of Mather's recorded experiences of mystical experience contain a strong component of personal assurance of God's love for him, and more specifically His purposes in Mather's ministry: "The Lord assured my weeping Faith, That being possessed by the Holy Spirit of my Lord Jesus Christ, I shall be employ'd in great Service for Him, which is the one Thing, that I desire above every Thing else."[2] Mather is very conscious of his vocation as a writer and very earnest in seeking particular assurance from God on the success of this.

> This Day, I received a short Letter from an holy Servant of Christ, which had this . . . Passage in it. "You'l pardon my troubling you, with a Line, to thank you for your *Maschil* . . . How full of Excellency is . . . the Lord JESUS CHRIST, if by His Holy Spirit, He so

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[1] C. Mather, *Diary*, I (New York, 1957), (September, 1681).

[2] *Ibid.*, 207 (October, 1696).

> fills one of His Admirers, that he is Enabled to fill a Book with such excellent Things!" Tis impossible for me to express the Satisfaction of Soul, which the Sight of this Passage raised in me. That holy ones, whose Hearts are sett upon glorifying of the Lord Jesus Christ, should by any Thing of Him in me, be led unto the Contemplation of His Glories! This, this is the highest pitch of my Felicity; I aspire to nothing higher than this, throughout eternal Ages . . . I despise the Diadems of Emperours, in Comparison of it. I am happy, I am happy. Lord, I am swallowed up with the Extasies of thy Love![1]

It is interesting that in the middle and latter years of the 1690's, when Mather's ministerial and writing careers were just beginning to open up into full stride, and he was working on his acknowledged masterpiece, the Magnalia, he recorded an unusual number of experiences of assurance that God was going to make an extraordinarily broad use of his talents.

> When I am committing my Church-History (which great Work runs great Hazards of Miscarrying) into the Hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, I receive wonderful Assurances, (I think, I know) from Heaven, that the Lord will accept it, and preserve it, and publish it, and that it shall not be lost. An heavenly Afflatus causes me sometimes to fall into Tears of Joy, assured, that the Lord has heard my Supplications about this Matter.[2]

All of these experiences are centered on Mather and his career, and a case might easily be made that they are transparent projections of his ego. On the other hand, if we assume that there is a deep and God-implanted, hunger for such assurances of divine love in all men -- a hunger satisfied with lesser loves and lesser assurances among the majority who never seek for the Fountain of all love -- such experiences cannot be necessarily ruled out as delusive. In many of them there is a high degree of outward-directed appreciation of God as He is in Himself:

> This Day after my public Labours, retiring into My Study, at the Evening, I there cast myself prostrate in the Dust, on my Floor before

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[1] Ibid., 426 (May, 1702).

[2] Ibid., 411 (February, 1701/2). Cf. the ecstasies of assurance in these passages in the Diary: I (New York, 1957); 222 (February, 1696/7); 278 (November, 1698); 471 (March, 1702/3); 483 (May, 1703); 501 (January, 1703/4).

> the Lord. And there, a wonderful Thought with an Heavenly Force, came into my Mind; That God loved my Lord Jesus Christ infinitely, and had given Worlds unto Him, and made Him the Lord of all; and, that I had, thro' the Efficacy of His Grace upon mee, my Heart exceedingly sett upon the glorifying of my Lord Jesus Christ and was entirely devoted unto Him. Hereupon, an unutterable Joy fill'd my Mind, from Assurance, that God, for the Sake of my Lord Jesus Christ, had great Things to do for mee; that Hee would even delight in mee, and delight in using mee, and use mee in eminent Services for Him, who is dearer to mee, than all Things.[1]

But here again there is a curious, almost indissoluble admixture of self-reference in the mystical experience. The last sentence might either be the fullest expression of outgoing love, or the most intricate transformation of agape into a form of self-interest. It is interesting that in later years, in the midst of a series of 'killing things' in his family and public life, Mather's ecstasies more and more take on a tone of sober reality, and their theme becomes self-emptiness.

> I behold myself in the Condition of one that is nailed unto a Cross. A Man that is crucified, endures very uneasy Circumstances, and has all possible Indignities heaped upon him, and finds himself stript of everything he had in the World . . . My Spirit is reconciled unto this Condition; tis welcome to me, in regard of the glorious Designs which my SAVIOUR has, in ordering for me such a Conformity unto Himself.[2]

Mather is first brought to the point of sacrificing all the memorials of his earthly fame:

> So dead am I grown to this World, and so willing to disappear unto it, and so dispos'd wholy to be swallow'ed up in God; that among other Effects of this Frame, I am inclined wholly to destroy all these Memorials of my Life . . . As I am determined, that I will never have my Picture drawn; and I repent, that I have heretofore satt for some Draughts of it; So I would go on in daily Projections to do good, but am content that they be observed and remembered by the glorious God alone.[3]

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[1] Ibid., 255 (March, 1697/8).

[2] Ibid., II (New York, 1957), 476 (October, 1717).

[3] Ibid., 514-15 (February, 1717/18).

Later he comes to the sacrifice even of the spiritual goals and rewards of his career:

> My blessed SAVIOUR, the Healer of my Soul, has at length brought me to a Blessedness, which nothing in this World, nor all the good Things of a thousand such Worlds, may be compared unto. It was not enough that I should come unto this; I am willing to be stript of all my worldly Enjoyments, and have neither Wealth, nor Health, nor Name, nor Friend left unto me . . . But I must also come unto this . . . I am content, that I see no Reward of PIETY in the whole Time of my Pilgrimage upon Earth; and that none of my Prayers have such Answers here given to them, as I could have wished for.[1]

It seems that Mather himself gradually became aware of some admixture of religious selfishness in all his previous life. And yet, he did not ultimately destroy the diaries. A comment he made near the end of his life indicates that his experiences were not unknown to the public, and were even utilized in his enemies' attacks; but these he will not sacrifice:

> I feel a secret Joy in it, that I am thus conformed unto Him who was despised and rejected of Men . . . That I say demonstrate this Joy, I would utterly forbear taking any Step (as I easily could many) to throw Confusion upon the Men, who would make me low in the Eyes of all the Countrey. A Man in black, may deride these Things, under the Name of, my _Extasies_, but, I bless GOD, I know the Meaning of them.[2]

A special form of spiritual experience with which Mather was much preoccupied, and which often occurred to him in the ecstasies of his early years, was what he called the 'particular faith.' There were times when Mather would feel himself irradiated by the divine presence in the course of intercessory prayer, and persuaded by this to entertain, not just a 'general faith' that his prayers would gain some response from God, but a 'particular faith' that the answers would be positive.

> There is a _Particular Faith_, which is not so much the Duty, as the _Comfort_ of them that have it, and which is Granted, but _here_ and

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[1] _Ibid_., 641 (August, 1721).

[2] _Ibid_., 774-5 (November, 1724).

> there, but now and then, unto those whom a Sovereign GOD shall Please to Favour with it. The Devout believer cannot cause himself to Believe What and When he will; but under the Energy of some Superiour Cause, . . . there is a Strong Impression made upon his mind, which Dissolves Him in a Flood of Tears, and Assures him, Thou shalt have the Petition . . . The Impression is born in upon his mind, with as clear a Light, and as full a Force, as if it were from Heaven Angelically, and even Articulately declared unto him.[1]
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> The Impression at the same time fills him, with all Holy Dispositions, and Holy Resolutions, and produces an Heavenly Temper, and leaves him with the Luster of an Excellent Spirit upon him . . . It were perhaps as easy for me, to give unto a Man born Blind, an Idea of Light, and of the Colors made by it, as for me to Describe in Words, unto the Understanding of a Stranger, how it is!
>
> . . . .
>
> It looks very like an Operation of the HOLY SPIRIT, wherein His ANGELS, may be His Ministers, and His instruments.[2]

Mather derived his early belief in the particular faith directly from his father, but the concept seems to have been common in New England Puritanism from the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Experiences of this kind occurred in the lives of John Cotton,[3] Thomas Hooker,[4] and John Wilson;[5] and Mather even speaks of whole congregations having such impressions.[6]

In his early years, and especially toward the turn of the century, Mather had a profusion of such ecstatic assurances, in connection with his concern about a preaching journey,[7] the arrival of a ship from

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[1] C. Mather, Parentator (Boston, 1724), pp. 189-90.

[2] Ibid., pp. 190, 199. The validation of mystical experience, and its distinction from demonic counterfeits, by its effect on the temper of the subject's life, is common in earlier mystical literature in the Catholic tradition.

[3] C. Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana, I (Hartford, 1855), 258.

[4] Emory Battis, Saints and Sectaries (Williamsburg, Va., 1962), p. 61.

[5] C. Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana, I (Hartford, 1855), 247.

[6] Ibid., 192.

[7] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 272 (September, 1698).

Europe,[1] the publication of one of his books in London,[2] the growth of his congregation,[3] and in many instances involving the birth or health of children.[4] Mather might easily mistake his own enthusiasm for the assurance of God in such matters. He himself began to suspect that something on this order might be occurring after a few of his assurances failed to come to pass, especially his conviction that his father would make a second diplomatic journey to England,[5] and a subsequent persuasion that his second wife would recover from an illness.[6] In March of 1705/6 Mather noted that he was still experiencing particular faiths, though the miscarriage in 1700 of his strong assurance about his father's trip made him now "rather shy . . . of any thing having such a Tendency."[7] In 1707 he is still, almost against his will, being invaded by particular faiths, and he comments,

> On the one side, the Defeat I have once had in Particular Faith, has long rendered me afraid of ill-founded Enthusiasms; and it may bee, too ready, even to shake off some Impressions and Influences from the angelical Quarter, on my Mind. On the other Side, it is possible, that my great Sinfulness, and Slothfulness, and Filthiness, and my forward Indisposition to attend unto such Things, may deprive me, of many Communications from the heavenly World with which I might otherwise be favoured.[8]

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[1] Ibid., 280 (November, 1698).

[2] Ibid., 282 (November, 1698).

[3] Ibid., 317 (September, 1699).

[4] Ibid., 294 (February, 1698/9); 303 (June, 1699); 307 (July, 1699); 340 (March, 1699/1700); 345 (April, 1700); 376 (December, 1700).

[5] Ibid., 303 (June, 1699); 328 (November, 1699); 353-6 (June, 1700); and 400 (July, 1701).

[6] Ibid., 434 (June, 1702); 435 (July, 1702); 437 (August, 1702); 453-4 (November, 1702).

[7] Ibid., 555 (March, 1705-6).

[8] Ibid., 594 (July, 1707).

After this point, however, there are no more *Diary* entries on the subject, and Mather seems to have adopted a studied caution with regard to it, at least in his personal life. In his public ministry, whereas he had formerly recommended the laity to seek after such assurances[1] he now cautioned, in 1709,

> I am not recommending a *Particular Faith*; For tho' *that* Sometimes may be a *Ray* shot into the Hearts of the *Prayerful*, from the *Heavenly World*, and it ought not to be *Blasphemed*; Yet it is not the *Duty* of any man; he *Sins* not, in his being without it; and it is a *Jewel* so easily *Counterfeited*, (they who have thought they have had it, have sometimes been imposed upon) . . . We may not always presume, that the very *Particular Thing*, which we have asked, shall be granted.[2]

In a later sermon, he returns cautiously to the subject, trying to define certain signs that an assurance is genuine:

> Sometimes much and long *Importunity* in *Prayer*; This is a *Good Sign*, that the *Prayer* shall not be lost . . . Is there enkindled such a *Warmth* in the Soul of the Supplicant, as distils the *Tears* of an Expanding and a Dissolving Heart? Is this *Warmth* kept alive, after many Damps cast thereupon; so that it is *Incessant*, it holds on, it holds out; Tho' the Lord seem in His Providence to rate it off like a *Dog*, yet it still pleads for Mercy? This is a *Good Sign* . . . Again, Sometimes a Profound *Resignation* in *Prayer* . . . The Prayer is Answered, if the Soul be Strengthened.[3]

The distinctive tests here are reminiscent of Goodwin's treatise on *The Returne of Prayers*,[4] which is rather circumspect about subjective experiences of this sort, although it does credit their reality. Shortly after his second wife's death, and the disappointment of his assurance about her recovery, he preached a sermon in which he remarked that

> Sometimes we ask for *temporal Blessings*, or, for such as are not particularly promised in the *Covenant of Grace*. The Holy Spirit

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[1] C. Mather, *Help for Distressed Parents* (Boston, 1695), p. 33; *A Family Well-Ordered* (Boston, 1699), p. 34.

[2] C. Mather, *The Cure of Sorrow* (Boston, 1709), pp. 25-6.

[3] C. Mather, *Menachem* (Boston, 1716), p. 25.

[4] Thomas Goodwin, *The Returne of Prayers* (London, 1636).

> of God favours us with so much of a *Particular Faith*, as to say, *the Lord hath heard the Voice of my Weeping; the Lord hath heard my Supplication; the Lord will receive my Prayer*. We may be too ready to *limit* the Sense of the Holy Spirit, by our own strong Affections to the *temporal Blessings*, and conclude, *the Thing must be done in just such or such a manner*. No; the Sense of the Holy Spirit, is no more than this . . . *I'l carry the matter, unto another Channel, wherein thou shalt have all thy Desires more than answered*. The bravest Effort of a True and a strong *Faith*, is, To leave all entirely unto the Lord, and be satisfied with the infinite Wisdome of His Conduct.[1]

But despite such warnings, in his latest writings Mather still feels that it is as dangerous wholly to deride such assurances as it is wholly to trust them, since he is concerned not to "despise prophecyings," and "quench the Spirit."[2]

In this conclusion Mather apparently spoke for the central concensus in New England Puritanism, which was unwilling to rule out all supernatural acts of the Holy Spirit, although it cautioned against antinomian enthusiasm. Besides particular faiths, there were several extraordinary operations of the Spirit which were recognized among American Puritans. Mather records instances of actual prophecy (in the sense of premonitions of coming events) in the ministries of Thomas Hooker, Samuel Stone, Francis Higginson, Thomas Parker, and John Eliot;[3] several instances of supernatural guidance by means of 'sudden impressions' or 'impulses;'[4] and even a case of a vision given in a dream.[5] Mather records a number of instances when he felt himself to be directly guided under the Spirit's impulse.[1] He also had premonitions concerning the future fate of an Indian slave,[2] the emergence of scandals in his congregation,[3] and certain additions to his library.[4] Most of these instances are notably also from his early years, before his partial disillusionment with particular faiths. However, he also records that in 1721 he foretold the coming great plague of smallpox in which he was signally involved.[5] In all these cases Mather seems to assume as common belief the fact that revelations of this sort are the supernatural gifts which God often gives those who are marked out as spiritual leaders within Puritan Christendom. He remarks that his father experienced

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[1] C. Mather, *Diary*, I (New York, 1957), 453-4 (November, 1702). This concurs with Mather's *The Cure of Sorrow* (Boston, 1709), p. 27, in which the Spirit's assurance is mainly identified with the persuasion that our prayers have been heard, and will receive some answer.

[2] C. Mather, *Parentator* (Boston, 1724), p. 195.

[3] C. Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, I (Hartford, 1855), 342, 436, 361, 486, 534-5.

[4] *Ibid.*, 167-8, 489.

[5] *Ibid.*, 316.

> . . . those Presagious Impressions about Future Events, which are often Produced in Minds, which by Piety and Purity and Contemplation, and a Prayerful and Careful Walk with GOD, are made more Susceptible of them . . . The famous Dr. Henry More, who is not Ordinarily numbered among Fanatics, has a Passage that may a little Solve some of these Appearances. "Though the Spirit of Prophecy in some sense be ceased, yet GOD hath not hereby Precluded His own Power, nor yet that of His Ministering Spirits from Visiting and Affecting of His Servants as He pleaseth. And there are some Pious Persons to whom it must not be Denied, that very Unusual Things of one sort or another have sometimes happened.[6]

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[1] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 195 (May, 1696, guided to use a certain plaster to cure heart-burn); 212 (December, 1696/7, guided to pray for a sea party that had been wrecked); 259 (May, 1698, guided by the misreading of a scripture passage to send a manuscript to England).

[2] Ibid., 22 (July, 1681).

[3] Ibid., 213 (December 1696/7).

[4] Ibid., 214 (January, 1696-7).

[5] Ibid., II, (New York, 1957), 621 (May, 1721).

[6] C. Mather, Parentator (Boston, 1724), p. 79. K. B. Murdock comments that while most New England ministers experienced preternatural guidance and other supernatural phenomena, few had the courage to admit this and deal openly with the problems involved, as Mather did (vide Murdock, Literature and Theology in Colonial New England [Cambridge, Mass., 1949], p. 110). The possibility of visions and guidance by the Spirit was admitted also by Spener and Francke (A. W. Nagler, Pietism and

Mather, however, like the more famous Medieval and Counter-Reformation mystics, came to deprecate the seeking of mystical states and extraordinary gifts as in any way preferable to the common walk of sanctification, which the Catholic would call 'the normal ascetic way.'[1] "It is best not being too fond of *Enthusiasms*, that may carry you beyond the *Dispensations of the day*," Mather remarks;[2] "A Soul Sanctified with the Love of GOD, and of CHRIST, and of our Neighbour, is altogether to be preferred before all the *Extraordinary Gifts* of the Holy SPIRIT.[3] Mather echoes Ignatius Loyola in his observation that too great an interest in such gifts can lead to delusion through the deception of evil spirits, and speaks of the necessity of the discernment of spirits:

> *Extraordinary Gifts* of the Holy SPIRIT bestowed upon Men are to be Examined by the *Rules of* PIETY, and that if the *Operations* that look *Miraculous* do lead us into anything which is contrary to PIETY, they are to be rejected, among the *Wiles* of the *Prince of Darkness transforming himself into an Angel of Light*. I also Grant, and always Think, that there can be nothing more wholesome to be inculcated, than that Advice of our *Franckius*, *It is not safe*

Methodism (Nashville, 1918), p. 39; J. T. McNeill, *Modern Christian Movements* (Philadelphia, 1954), p. 63). The latter commented, "*Ich bin in allen meinen Sachen immer passiv gegangen, habe still gessessen und nicht einen Schritt weiter getan, als ich den Finger Gottes vor mir hätte*" (E. Beyreuther, *August Hermann Francke, 1663-1727, Zeurge des Lebendigen Gottes* [*2te Aufl*., Marburg, 1961], p. 81).

[1] Bernard of Clairvaux had advised contemplatives not to depend on 'sensible consolations,' but to expect them to vanish even while experiencing them and simply to remember them once they have gone, without seeking their recurrence (P. Pourrat, *Christian Spirituality*, tr. by W. H. Mitchell and S. P. Jacques, II [Westminster, Md., 1953], 38. Teresa of Avila had taught that perfection is not found in extraordinary states but in full conformity to the divine will (Pourrat, *op. cit.*, III [Westminster,M 1953], p. 171). John of the Cross introduced the notion that a stripping away of such clinging to sensory consolations is necessary to the highest purification of the spirit (Pourrat, *op. cit.*, III [Westminster, Md., 1953], p. 198). Alexander Whyte notes that most Puritans were in agreement with the Catholic tradition on this matter (*Thomas Shepard* [London, 1909], p. 61).

[2] C. Mather, *Parentator* (Boston, 1724), p. 195.

[3] C. Mather, *India Christiana* (Boston, 1721), p. 72.

> to affect Extraordinary Gifts: For they may be at least accidentally, attended with Mighty Dangers to them that are not very deeply rooted in humility. But who dare engage for himself his being so?[1]

Still Mather insists that it is lawful to ask for 'angelical operations' to assist in eminent ministries like his own, and even to seek them with repeated fasting and prayer.[2]

The presumption that Mather's accounts of his ecstasies and other extraordinary states are true to life, and not mere stagecraft aimed at the future reader of his diaries, is confirmed by the fact that he records honestly several occasions when his labors in prayer produced "nothing extraordinary,"[3] and several in which he felt positively deserted by God, with "Much deadness . . . upon my sinful, slothful, woful Heart, in all the Exercises of the Day."[4]

> I sett myself, to attend the Duties of a Fast, in my Study, on this occasion. But I had a sad Experience, that I can't believe what I will, or when I will. An uncomfortable Dullness accompanied the Devotions of the Day . . . Instead of having my Mind replenished and irradiated with the holy Spirit, I found the evil Spirit buffetting of my mind, with impure Thoughts, which exceedingly abased me before the Lord.[5]

In explaining these experiences, Mather seeks to be consistently and tough-mindedly Augustinian. The desertions may be real withdrawals of God's grace, in which he humbles us simply by permitting our fallen nature to have its way: "How often have we a Deserted Soul; which is like the Heath in the Desert, and sees no Good coming from heaven upon it? . . .

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 73.

[3] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 197 (June, 1696); 210 (December, 1696); 296 (April, 1699).

[4] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 206 (June, 1696); 210 (December, 1696); 296 (April, 1699).

[5] Ibid., 430 (June, 1702).

How often . . . we are left without Vigor in the ways of God."[1] In The Grand Point of Solicitude, a treatise on 'divine desertions,' Mather states that these may extend to major declensions in which we become deaf to the thunders of warning Providence, set in ruinous courses, and utterly careless about our spiritual welfare. On the other hand, there are minor states of darkness which do not involve God's abandonment; for we "sometimes mistake those Things for Desertions, which are not really so . . . You may Enjoy much of God, when you imagine your selves to be much Forsaken of God. You may make thorough, and frightful, and humbling Discoveries of your own Corruptions; You may encounter with fierce Temptations; And yet not be Forsaken of God."[2]

> But I will allow, that you may be under true Desertions. 'Tis possible, That God may Suspend those Quickening Influences on your Souls, wherewith He does often Actuate, Regulate, Corroborate, the souls of the Faithful. Or else, God may withdraw from your sould, the Peaceful, Hopeful, Joyful Influences, with which the Souls of the Faithful are sometimes Irradiated. Perhaps, you find, that tho' you come to the Ordinances of God, yet the Ordinances have Little Force upon you . . . When you set about the Exercises of Devotion, you have no Assistances for those Exercises . . . When the Devil sets upon you, you are not able to Resist him, stedfast in the Faith; but are left unto your selves under this unhappiness . . . Your Conscience is wounded, and bleeding under Sins that have wasted it; and Horror takes hold of you; It is the Hour and Power of Darkness with you . . . Your Evidences for Heaven are not clear . . . At this Time the Spirit of God Seals you not, with any Comfortable, Powerful, Triumphant Perswasions, of your Heirship to the Kingdom of God; but leaves you in Suspense about your Title to Blessedness . . . At the same Time, your Cries to Heaven are not answered.[3]

Under these conditions Mather counsels the believer to examine himself for provoking causes; but above all, not to desert God, though deserted by Him.[4] And in another tract on the subject, The Case of a Troubled Mind

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[1] C. Mather, Utilia (Boston, 1716), p. 239.

[2] C. Mather, The Grand Point of Solicitude (Boston, 1715), p. 23.

[3] Ibid.

[4] The same counsel was given by John of the Cross; vide Pourrat, op. cit., III (Westminster, Md., 1953), 198.

(1715), he admits that "*Very good people* have Cause for a very sad Complaint, that the glorious GOD hides his Face from them."[1] Mather does not go so far as to assert that God sends such states of relative desertion to advance the soul in its growth, as did Counter-Reformation mysticism.[2]

B. *The Fragmentation of Communion with God in Daily Life*

There are several difficulties involved in any theory of Christian experience which defines communion with God in terms of the lone "ascent of Mount Carmel." There is, first of all, the solitariness of this piety, its vision of communion with God as a spiritual duet. The ending of Friedrich Rückert's mystical poem, "*Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen*," which Mahler has set very beautifully, illustrates this problem:

> *Ich bin gestorben dem Weltgetümmel*
> *Und ruh' in einem stillen Gebiet!*
> *Ich leb' allein in meinem Himmel,*
> *In meinem Lieben, in meinem Lied.*

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[1] C. Mather, *The Case of a Troubled Mind* (Boston, 1715), p. 5. The Puritan tradition generally recognized that such states of desertion might come upon those who were eminent Christians, as they came upon Christ himself.

[2] Interestingly enough, Spener and Francke agreed with John of the Cross and Teresa on this matter; *vide* A. W. Nagler, *Pietism and Methodism* (Nashville, 1918), p. 132; E. Peschke, *Studien zur Theologie August Hermann Franckes*, I (Berlin, 1964), pp. 48 ff. Francke held that God may withdraw at times from those who are very dear to Him, "as if the Heavens were brass," in order to destroy self-will, and to test and strengthen faith. He felt that experience of the immediate help of God is a work for children and beginners in the faith, and that it is in a walk by faith, without the 'sight' of sensible consolations, that maturity consists. Wesley, however, differed from the Pietists on this issue, perhaps because of his stronger teaching of perfection; (Nagler, *op. cit.*, p. 132), but he also seems to agree that, however fascinating and dear to his own experience emotional or transemotional states might be, they weigh little in God's sight compared to the quiet and ordinary growth of the soul in sanctification. Stoeffler (*The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* [Leiden, 1965], p. 14) points out that Pietism in its classical period was thus far from being preoccupied with feeling-states, unlike its later mutations.

There is a considerable contrast between this vision of the lone seeker and His God, and the dynamic community life of the New Testament, in which the sense of God's presence is dissolved in the vitality of human relationships. This is a piety of seeking and enjoying God, of eros, not a sense of communion with God which comes from service, in which God moves through men to bless and strengthen others. It is true that Mather spent much of his life in ingenious projects to serve others and his community -- but oddly enough, he does not often speak of the execution of such projects in connection with the experience of communion with God, except in the case of preaching.

These factors are part of a wider problem which I shall term the fragmentation of communion with God. The Puritan reformulation of Medieval piety unconsciously retained one of the assumptions of the earlier theories of Christian experience, that there is a necessary and continuing gap between the Christian and his God, under ordinary circumstances -- that his contacts with God must be on a kind of long-distance call basis, using certain rather laborious instruments of devotion to establish momentary liaison with God. Contesting this on the basis of New Testament teaching on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer, and the commands to "walk in the Spirit" and to be "led of the Spirit,"[1] the followers of George Fox and other enthusiasts insisted on a continuous relationship of the believer to God, in which obedience to the personal leading of the Spirit is an integrating factor throughout the whole experience of the Christian. This emphasis was, of course, set within a doctrinal context which differed widely from Reformation Christianity, except where later Quakers such as Robert Barclay endeavored to harmonize the two systems. For this reason, the Quakers' 'inner light' could readily become a thing which the Puritans would have difficulty in identifying with the Holy Spirit as defined in Reformed doctrine. In the early Quaker period it seemed to them a term for erratic and unreliable impulses which drove their subjects into fanaticism. In the later years, as Mather explicitly says, it was domesticated and secularized until it became identical with the only 'light' shared by all men, Christians and non-Christians alike, according to Puritan teaching: the 'light of nature,' or conscience.[1] Proponent of prodigies and secret enthusiast that he was, Mather still rejected the idea of the continuous leading of the Spirit, in its Quaker context. Edwards, attempting to guard the Awakening from its excesses, levelled even stronger criticisms against 'impulses' and similar eccentricities.[2]

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[1] Galatians 5:16, Romans 8:14.

And so the idea of a continuous mysticism, a constant walk in conscious fellowship with the Spirit of God, is not clearly discernible in Mather, and the experience of communion is thus fregmented into an intermittent series of 'mountain-top experiences' and hilltop glimpses of God. It is true that Mather does have a term for the continuous round of daily activity which sounds like a definition of continuous fellowship: 'walking with God.' And he can say that "My Life is almost a continual Conversation with Heaven, and more particularly, in my Attendence on the divine Institutions, my Intentions of Piety, and my Applications to Heaven, are so many and so various -- it becomes impossible for me to keep Records of thousands of them."[1] But one suspects that this might be a 'conversation' consisting of all broadcasting, and little receiving: it seems to identify fellowship with God with Mather's beloved methods, and this is confirmed in several other passages. "Therefore do's a Man *Walk with God*," Mather says, "when he *lives* in multiply'd Acts of *Respect* and *Homage* unto the Lord!"[2] Elsewhere he defines a walk with God as one in which the mind occupies itself a great deal with 'Multiplied and Operative Thoughts of God,"[3] so as "to be perpetually expressing some *Respect unto God*, wherever we come, and whatever we do."[4] The concept of being "filled with the Spirit" is defined merely in terms of a vigorous activity of the soul's faculties: "*Be filled with all the fulness of God*. Let us be *filled* with many Thoughts on God, and for God; be *fill'd* with apprehension of God, and with resolutions for God; be *filled* with Meditations upon the Fulness and Beauty that is in the Almighty God."[5] Walking with God is elsewhere defined as maintaining "a *sense* of God alwayes upon the Soul,"[6] "a *sense* of GOD kept alive in every part of our *Walk*,"[7] "in which we not only Realize the *Being* of an Infinite GOD, but we also Remember His *Presence* in every Place, and therefore His *Knowledge* of every Thing. Yea, The Remembrance of this must be *Frequent* with us; the Remembrance of this must be *Awful* to us; and it must have a *Constant Efficacy* on us."[1] Thus conscientious obedience to divine laws is also a part of 'walking with God': "Whatever purposes thou art pursuing in thy *Walk* . . . be Inquisitive, *What would the Word of GOD now lead me to?* *So walk in all the Commandments* and Ordinances *of the Lord*, that thou mayest be *Blameless*."[2] Mather allows that there is occasionally an element of the experience of contact with God involved in the daily walk, since "*Walking* with God cannot be without an *having* of God: God and Man do mutually *possess* each other in this blessed thing."[3] Although Mather usually reserves this strain of description for the mountain-top ascents in prayer, still he evidently found something of this at times in daily experience. What does not clearly emerge in any of his descriptions of daily life, however, is a sense of the immediate presence of God, encountered as a person who continues to guide the Christian not only through intermediate and objective controls, but in a direct, conscious fellowship.

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[1] C. Mather, The Principle of the Protestant Religion Maintained (Boston, 1690), pp. 97-8.

[2] Jonathan Edwards, Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England (Boston, 1746), pp. 226 ff.

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[1] C. Mather, *Diary*, II (New York, 1957), 267 (December, 1713).

[2] C. Mather, *Several Sermons Concerning Walking with God* (Boston, 1689), p. 4.

[3] C. Mather, *A Life of Piety Resolv'd upon* (Boston, 1714), p. 9.

[4] C. Mather, *The Christian Temple* (Boston, 1706), p. 31.

[5] C. Mather, *Batteries upon the Kingdom of the Devil* (London, 1695), p. 41.

[6] C. Mather, *Several Sermons Concerning Walking with God* (Boston, 1689), p. 6.

[7] C. Mather, *A Good Character*, (Boston, 1723), p. 4.

It can readily be objected that such a standard of continuous communion with God through the presence of the Spirit is ideal to the point of perfectionism, and that it had proved historically to be unstable and subject to rapid decay, either into fanaticism or rationalism. It must also be admitted that Mather's concept of normative communion with God is in itself infinitely closer to a continued fellowship than is common in most Protestant and Catholic theory and practice today. Granting all this, however, we must raise the question whether the New Testament portrayal of the normative function of Holy Spirit in the Christian life has been adequately dealt with in any theologian or movement, present or past. This is particularly true in the realm of Christian ethics. Our theologians have sought to break free from codebook morality to a situational ethic, and yet have raised the spectre of a relativistic anomie devoid of the balances which the Puritans sought to retain with their weighting of the Word against the Spirit. The solution to the questions implicit here might well lie in a concept of continuous, but not necessarily ecstatic, communion with the Spirit. In this view, ethical guidance would be accomplished neither by a lonely antinomianism charting a course by 'situational radar,' nor by a lonely moralism steering by the fixed principles of a codebook legalism, but in an ethics of relationship between God and the individual, by a continuous personal administration of biblical principles conducted by the indwelling Spirit. Against the background of such a model of the Christian life, both Catholic and Puritan mysticism seem too intermittent in their concept of the Christian's communion with God, and Quakerism, and its counterparts in modern theology, too unguarded.

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[1] C. Mather, *A Life of Piety Resolv'd upon* (Boston, 1714), p. 9.

[2] C. Mather, *A Good Character* (Boston, 1723), p. 7.

[3] C. Mather, *Several Sermons Concerning Walking with God* (Boston, 1689), p. 10.

6. The Discernment of Spirits

A. The Ministry of Angels

The 'mystical' dimension of Mather's thought and experience involved another form of contact with the supernatural world which is essential to his concept of mission, and so bears some study before we move on to that subject in the next chapter. Mather felt that vital spiritual experience involved not only the sensible awareness of contact with

God Himself through the ministry of the indwelling Spirit, but also the apprehension of other spirits, both good and evil, through the perception of help given to us by some and conflict mounted against us by others.

A preoccupation with the angels of God is of course common in several of the forms of Catholic piety. Bernard had prescribed meditation on the good angels as a means of sanctification, and had especially recommended devotion to the individual's 'guardian angel' as an important mediator between him and God.[1] Bernard had also maintained against the Dionysian school that knowledge of God in mystical experience was not a matter of direct contact with Him, but per speculum, a mediate knowledge through sensible images conveyed by angels.[2] The devotion to angels became a mark of Counter-Reformation piety among the Jesuits and in Francis de Sales, and especially characteristic of the Italian school of the sixteenth century.[3] The same preoccupation is found among mystics and enthusiasts along the boundaries of Protestantism, including Jacob Boehme and his successors.[4] Spener expressed a cautious interest in angelology, admitting the possibility of revelatory dreams and miracles wrought through such agencies, and the subsequent Pietist movement operated within an aura of supernatural expectation which welcomed rumors of angelic visitations.[1] The Puritan background in angelology is hard to trace historically, but it is clear that Cotton Mather derived his interest in angels immediately from his father,[2] and that it was intimately connected with his expectation of millenial revival.

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[1] P. Pourrat, Christian Spirituality, tr. by W. H. Mitchell and S. P. Jacques, II (Westminster, Md., 1953), 60. Belief in guardian angels had been common for some centuries in the church, but this is the first incidence of actual devotion to them, though it is simply a logical extension of hagiolatry.

[2] Ibid., 36, 70-1, 71.

[3] Ibid., 46-7, 244.

[4] Nils Thune, The Behmenists and the Philadelphians (Uppsala, 1948), p. 15.

The foundation of Mather's angelology is his concept of Jesus as Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, surrounded and worshipped by a heavenly court containing innumerable gatherings both of natural and supernatural creatures.[3] The good angels among these are incomporeal creatures whose number and order are not revealed, "Intellectual and Invisible Beings of a Rank Superiour to us."[4] The unfallen angelic hosts are charged with the fulfilment of a variety of tasks in the administration of God's Providence, like cosmic engineers controlling the machinery of destiny, the "wheels" of the world's "Continual Revolution."[5] Among the offices and actions which Mather attributes to the good angels are afflicting men with diseases or healing them;[6] the ordering of even the lesser daily providences of our lives;[7] defending or strengthening men in answer to prayer;[1] assisting in preaching;[2] the imparting of guidance through impulses, or even through the control of random bibliomancy;[3] and even the production of the spiritual ecstasy of the mystical relationship.[4] It is remarkable here that operations which later evangelicals would attribute principally to God's general Providence, or else to the interior agency of the Holy Spirit, are here spoken of as controlled by angels. Benz comments that for Mather all the activity of the Holy Spirit is mediated by angels, who are to him "the direct effective organs of the Holy Spirit, 'Servants who fulfill God's commands and bring about purposes of the Spirit in history and in the human heart."[5] Mather even attributes the tongues of Pentecost to angels, rather than to the Holy Spirit![6] Perhaps his motive in doing so is a certain caution about enthusiasm, a hesitancy about asserting too directly the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

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[1] F. F. Walrond, Philipp Jacob Spener (London, 1893), p. 93; D. W. Brown, "The Problem of Subjectivism in Pietism" (unpublished doctoral thesis, Northwestern University, 1962), p. 251.

[2] Cf. I. Mather, Angelographia (Boston, 1696).

[3] C. Mather, A Vision in the Temple (Boston, 1721), passim.

[4] C. Mather, Coelestinus (Boston, 1703), pp. 12-13, 91.

[5] C. Mather, Observanda (Boston, 1695), pp. 15 ff.

[6] Ibid., 167 (July, 1693); II (New York, 1957), 140 (December, 1711). He observes that "My Saviour has Healing in His Wings. Now, His good Angels are His Wings;" ibid., 8 (May, 1709).

[7] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 201 (July, 1696).

The result, however, is an even more eccentric mysticism involving the social intercourse of human beings and angels. Mather believed firmly in the possibility of angelic apparitions. He was in contact with individuals who claimed to have seen "shining Spirits," such as the lady at Salem who predicted to him further storms of witchcraft, and Margaret Rule, the energoumen with whom Mather attempted exorcism, who was directed by an angel to regard Mather as her earthly father.[1] But Mather himself experienced such visions. We have already examined the central vision which he had of his entire life's work in his twenty-third year.[2] He had another vision of the support of his ministry by angelic legions, rather similar to Jacob's in the desert, at thirty-five;[3] and around 1693 an angel even appeared to him with the express purpose of requesting him to preach on Acts 9:5.[4] In his Diary references he Latinized two of the accounts of these visitations, including prayers to be delivered from Satanic illusions, and simply omitted mention of the third until a much later date; but by the end of his life he boldly asserted the possibility of communion with angels, and intimated that he and his father had enjoyed such experiences.[5] A great part of his interest in such occurrences -- apart from the understandable surprise produced by their invading his own experience -- was his gradually developing conviction that the new millenial age would be accompanied not only by an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but by a remarkable descent of angels empowering certain spokesmen of revival who would bring in the reformation by proclaiming the "Everlasting Gospel."

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[1] Ibid., 248-9 (October, 1713); 265 (November 1713).

[2] Ibid., 396 (April, 1701): Mather felt that the angels enabled him with a particular fluency and power when he preached about them.

[3] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), pp. 377-8 (December, 1700).

[4] C. Mather, Memorials of Early Piety (Boston, 1711), p. 50.

[5] E. Benz, "Pietist and Puritan Sources of Early Protestant World Missions," Church History, XX (1951), 46.

[6] C. Mather, Things to be More Thought Upon (Boston, 1713), p. 26.

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[1] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 172 (October, 1693); 175 (October, 1698).

[2] Ibid., 86-7, (February, 1685).

[3] Ibid., 263-4 (June, 1698).

[4] Ibid., II (New York, 1957), 190 (March, 1713).

[5] C. Mather, Parentator (Boston, 1724), pp. 79, 199; The Palm Bearers (Boston, 1725). Increase Mather openly admitted his belief in angelic apparitions; vide his Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences (Boston, 1684), p. 202.

> There shall be *Men* Qualified like, and Influenced by, the *Angels* of God; These *Boanerges*, and *Sons of Commotion*, shall fly thro' the *midst of Heaven*, having *this* EVERLASTING GOSPEL *to Preach unto Inhabitants of the Earth*. And our Glorious LORD will *shake Heaven*, and *shake the Earth*, and *shake all Nations*, till this gospel be complied withal. That Glorious Cry, *Babylon is fallen*, will ensue upon it![1]

Even before his millenial enthusiasm was fully awakened, Mather was asking God for "the Enjoyment of all those *angelical Kindness*" common to his chosen servants, to be enjoyed "in a Manner and Measure more *Transcendent*, than what the great *Corruption* in the Generality of *good Men*, permitted them to bee made Partakers of."[2] He early came to an assurance that because of Christ the angels would "*love* mee, *help* mee, *teach* mee, bee *nigh* mee, bee *with* mee, fetch mee to bee with *Them* forever."[3] His goal in seeking such experience is not entirely limited to his usual vaulting ambition after spiritual greatness; he also hungers after this communion for its own sake:

> I beleeve that the God of Heaven vouchsafes, especially to some of His faithful Servants, a more singular Conduct of His Providence, with the Management, and Ministry of His Holy *Angels*. And not altogether insensible of the Sweetness attending such a Life, I desire to have all the Affairs and Motions of my Life, more than ever, under that singular Conduct of Heaven.[4]

It is hard not to sense in all of this a trace of what T. E. Hulme, referring to Romanticism, called 'spilt religion,' a displacement of affection from God to secondary objects. Mather seems to go to strange lengths to give credit to angels for the supernatural experiences in his own and others' lives, with a consequent downgrading of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He will devote sessions in his days of prayer to consideration of, and thanksgiving for, the angels' ministry;[1] and he feels guilty of insufficient devotion to angels and resolves to publicise their activities more widely among men by preaching on them or making a collection of biblical accounts on them.[2] He is involved in devotion to his guardian angel, also, and concerned about his having often grieved this creature.[3] He does warn against thanking the angels themselves for their ministry, stating that we are simply to thank the Lord for His employment of them.[4] Still the modern reader cannot help feeling that an improper amount of attention, and perhaps affection, is being directed away from God and toward religious objects about which the biblical witness is, perhaps purposefully, rather reticent.

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[1] C. Mather, *Shaking Dispensations* (Boston, 1715), pp. 27-8; cf. Benz, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

[2] C. Mather, *Diary*, I (New York, 1957), 162-3 (March, 1693).

[3] *Ibid.*, 255 (March 1698), cf. 479 (April, 1703).

[4] *Ibid.*, 281 (December 1698).

On the other hand, in most cases Mather had some scriptural backing for his conception of the ministry of angels, and he was wary of a completely subjective approach to the subject based on his own religious experience. The credulous side to his nature had unbalanced fascination with the supernormal. But this is perhaps only an extreme instance, a distortion, of a certain sensitivity to 'the invisible world' which may be a very real gift of the Spirit to certain individuals, described by Paul as "the discernment of spirits."[5] One thinks of the profound awareness of supersensory realities characteristic of John Henry Newman from his youth, expressed in the treatment of the angelic ministry in The Dream of Gerontius. There may be a quality of belief here which is biblically normative, despite its refraction through the lenses of Mather's tendencies toward superstition.

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[1] Ibid., 267 (June, 1698); II (New York, 1957), 40 (February, 1711); 520-22 (February, 1722), a whole day of prayer dedicated to angels.

[2] Ibid., 200 (July, 1696); 577-9 (December - January, 1718/19); 659 (November, 1721); 680 (December, 1721).

[3] Ibid., I (New York, 1957), 188 (April, 1696).

[4] C. Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana, I (Hartford, 1855), 96.

[5] I Corinthians 12:10.

B. The Spiritual Conflict

It is difficult for us to judge this matter accurately, for we have our own set of distorting lenses, overcorrected against Mather's credulity. In its scientific reaction to the residue of Medieval superstition in the seventeenth-century mind, the Enlightenment used Occam's razor to remove all unnecessary supernatural entities from the face of nature. As a result, we live today in a universe which has been thoroughly cleared of ghosts and functioning witches; but in the process we have lost the ability to conceive of all personal beings between the estate of man and God. It is possible to argue that this is not a gain in intellectual sobriety, but a failure of the imagination. The Enlightenment operation was carried out with such success that it still determines the thought of some theological schools with iron force, and it is accepted as an inelectable first truth of reason that God could not populate the universe with creatures beyond mankind in powers and intelligence; but this is an irrational assumption if examined objectively. The fairly reserved and chaste treatment of such beings in the biblical literature scripture cannot be viewed only through the comic-strip images of popular folk-religion. We must set these stereotypes aside if we are to understand Mather's treatment of angels and demons, although we cannot overlook Mather's role in precipitating the wholesale flight of the civilized world from superstition. For Mather had the misfortune to live exactly at that juncture in history where the shift was about to occur; and in his own career he was dragged painfully over the ridge of the ideological watershed, into a new world where popular superstition shifted from its bondage to "a fabulous, formless darkness," as Yeats calls it, into a new kind of unreality, an unnaturally empty universe, filled only with the terrible simplifying light of deified human intelligence.

Mather's treatment of spiritual conflict and the whole realm of fallen angels is rooted in a very old succession of Christian tradition. Beyond the New Testament treatment of the subject, the first determinitive formulation of the spiritual conflict is in the accounts of Anthony and the desert fathers, where there is already a luxuriant overgrowth of extrabiblical superstition. Anthony felt from his experience that those especially close to Christ were particularly subject to Satanic assault, which might take the form of temptation to sin, obsessive thoughts, hallucinatory visions, doubts, suggestions of pride, goading toward extreme asceticism, and actual physical manhandling by demons. He felt that Satanic revelations could be distinguished from the illumination of the Holy Spirit by the temper of calmness which the latter left upon the soul, and recommended repelling the attack of evil spirits by prayer, meditation, fasting, the practice of virtue and even making the sign of the cross.[1] This basic picture of spiritual combat was reflected in one form or another by most of those involved in Christian spirituality during the Patristic and Medieval periods. In the pre-Reformation period, Gerson, and others seeking to combat false mysticism, placed a great deal of emphasis on the methods of 'discerning the spirits' to weed out false visions and cast off oppression. The Imitation of Christ lists sixteen rules for discerning demonic onslaughts on the mind. Ignatius Loyola gave considerable attention to this problem,[1] and so did other main leaders of the Counter-Reformation (and, we might note, Catholic writers on spiritual matters even to the present day).[2] The same emphasis on spiritual conflict is carried over into the Puritan tradition as an essential part of the developed life of godliness. John Downame's The Christian's Warfare[3] and William Gurnall's The Christian in Complete Armour[4] were two immensely popular works on the warfare with hostile spirits circulating at the beginning of the seventeenth century, testifying to the practicality of the subject for the common Puritan believer. They differ from Patristic and Medieval models mainly in the slightly different emphasis they have on the connection of mission and combat: the believer is conceived of not as the lonely ascetic, playing king-of-the-hill against Satanic forces in mystical isolation, but as the embattled warrior pressing into enemy territory in his daily mission for Christ, buffeted by the powers of darkness because of his agency in the destruction of their empire. A condition of fairly continuous spiritual combat thus is regarded as the normal milieu for the healthy Christian, considered as Christ's soldier.[5] The rootage of this conception of the battle in the Reformation becomes quite obvious when we study the history of Luther's Anfechtungen and such utterances as Ein Feste Berg, and when we examine Calvin's treatment of the subject, with its sophisticated exegetical attack on the sixteenth-century equivalent of demythologizing.[1]

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[1] Pourrat, _op. cit._, I (London, 1922), 130-4.

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[1] Ignatius Loyola, Spiritual Exercises (Baltimore, 1959), p. 141-153.

[2] Pourrat, op. cit., II (Westminster, Md., 1953), 274, 300; III, pp. 25 ff.; cf. Adolphe Tanqueray, The Spiritual Life (Tournai, 1951), pp. 450, 718-24.

[3] J. Downame, The Christian Warfare Against the Devill, the World, and Flesh (London, 1634).

[4] W. Gurnall, The Christian in Complete Armour (London, 1964).

[5] K. B. Murdock, Increase Mather (Cambridge, Mass., 1926), p. 101.

Mather is characteristically uninterested in speculations about the nature of devils. He simply accepts them as fallen spirits, according to the common teaching of Patristic, Medieval and Reformation doctrine, and then concentrates his attention on the ways in which they may affect our lives practically. He does venture a few statements about the limits of their domain, as in Hades Look'd Into (1717):

> You must allow me to complain of one Word in our Translation of my Text; and insist upon the Correcting and Altering of it. It is the word, Hell. The Greek tearm Hades ought to be translated, The Invisible World. Hell, or, the Prison of the Damned, is but a very little part, and only the wretched part of the Invisible World. It bears no more proportion to the Invisible World, than some small, desolate Rock, suppose upon the Isles of Scilly, does to a mighty Island, enriched with all the Grandeurs of a Flourishing Empire.[2]

The fallen angels, whose "numerosity exceeds that of avian phylum,"[3] are confined at present by God to a part of this invisible world: they are the "powers of the air" (Eph. 2:2): "The Sovereign GOD hath, with infinite Wisdom & Justice, confined them unto this Atmosphere . . . Our

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[1] John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion (Grand Rapids, 1949), I, xiv. William Haller, and even a modern Catholic like Helen White, fall into exactly the kind of oversimplification which Calvin condemns -- and misunderstand the Puritans completely -- when they speak of the warfare imagery of Puritanism as simply a dramatization of the believer's inner conflict with sin, employed in order to hold the audience; both preacher and congregation felt that they were up against real personal combatants. Vide William Haller, The Rise of Puritanism (New York, 1938), 25; Helen C. White, English Devotional Literature (Prose), 1600-1640.

[2] C. Mather, Hades Look'd Into (Boston, 1717), p. 4.

[3] C. Mather, Agricola (Boston, 1727), p. 31.

Air is fill'd with them, as with *Flies* in *Mid-summer*."[1] These are the occupying powers holding secret control over the nations, and mobilizing their visible and invisible forces to destroy the Kingdom of God or impede its progress by counterattack. Thus the ministry is particularly subject to Satanic attack, either through external persecutions or internal pressures;[2] especially in the early years of a pastorate.[3] We begin to sense at this point that Mather is speaking out of his own experience, and the suspicion is confirmed: he remarks that "those Men who have least of the Devil *dwelling* in them, have most of the Devil *striking* at them,"[4] and elsewhere says that those who essay especially great works for God are bound to undergo severe conflict:[5]

> Syrs, You must Expect, That such will be the Rage of *Satan* at you for the *Damage* you are Continually doing to his *Kingdom* in This World, and such the Power of the Evil *Spirit Working in the Children of Disobedience*, as to procure you *Wonderful Molestations* . . . You shall be *Especially* sensible of a *Blast from the Terrible*, when you are Engaging in any *Special Services* for your Glorious LORD; Perhaps, In some Ill Turn, some hard Shock, upon hour *Health*; perhaps, In some Hours of *Distressing Darkness* upon your Mind; or, if not so, then in some *Storm of Obloquy* from the People, unaccountably running away with Base and False Representations of you.[6]

But although this fits the case of Mather himself rather exactly, it was common lore among New England Puritan ministers, "Who commonly have their spirits *buffeted* with strong *temptations* and sore *dejections*, before their performing any special service of their ministry."[1] Mather was convinced that he would have to endure special retaliations when he spoke or wrote to expose the devices of the Devil,[2] just as he experienced special angelic help in speaking about the good angels; and two of his books along these lines begin by expressing an expectation of such counter-attack.[3] He also observes that any work which is powerfully effective in reviving the kingdom of God will encounter human and demonic resistance, as did the work of the Pietists on the Continent:

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[1] C. Mather, *The Armour of Christianity* (Boston, 1704), p. 6.

[2] C. Mather, *Manuductio ad Ministerium* (Boston, 1726), p. 79.

[3] C. Mather, *Parentator* (Boston, 1724), p. 26.

[4] C. Mather, *Batteries upon the Kingdom of the Devil* (London, 1895), p. 24.

[5] C. Mather, *The Minister* (Boston, 1722), p. 41; cf. the *Diary*, I (New York, 1957), 286 (January, 1699); II (New York, 1957), 481 (October, 1717).

[6] C. Mather, *Icono-Clastes* (Boston, 1717), Preface.

> The World begins to feel a Warmth, from the Fire of God, which thus flames in the Heart of Germany, beginning to extend into many Regions; the whole World will e're long be sensible of it! . . . These Performances, notwithstanding the evident Sanctity and laudable Tendency of then, have encountered with Enemies and Obliquies. And indeed, while what we have in the Third Chapter of Genesis is where it is, or while a Lifeless Religion, with a Dread of all Disturbance given to it, so much suits the corrupt Nature of Man, we must not wonder at it.[4]

This analysis is identical with that of the Pietist leaders themselves. Mather comments that the Devil is particularly active in causing divisions within churches, and attacking the proponents of ecumenical unity.[5]

The devices used by the Devil in retaliatory conflict are much more various and subtle than those few which popular folk-religion has retained. Temptation to sin is one such stratagem, but it is only one of many, and perhaps not the most important one in Mather's eyes.[6] The Devil may also thrust into the mind persuasive chains of argument leading to doubt or heresy, or else injections of blasphemous thoughts masquerading as the subjects own thinking. Problems like these, according to Mather, were a fairly common syndrome among New England ministers.[1] Like John Bunyan, who records his own early struggles with such mental assaults in Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners, Mather knew about such devices from personal experience:

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[1] C. Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana, I (Hartford, 1855), 491.

[2] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 396 (April, 1701); 330-1 (January, 1700).

[3] C. Mather, Wonders of the Invisible World (Boston, 1693), p. iii.

[4] C. Mather, Nuncia Bona e Terra Longinqua (Boston, 1715), p. 9.

[5] C. Mather, Wonders of the Invisible World (Boston, 1693), p. 26; cf. Zalmonah (Boston, 1725), p. 47.

[6] C. Mather, The Armour of Christianity (Boston, 1704), passim.

> Was ever man more tempted, than the miserable Mather! Should I tell, in how many Forms the Divel has assaulted me, and with what Subtilty and Energy, his Assaults have been carried on, it would strike my Friends with Horrour. Sometimes, Temptations to Impurities; and sometimes to Blasphemy, and Atheism, and the Abandonment of all Religion, as a meer Delusion; and sometimes, to self-Destruction itself.[2]

At a later date he writes, "I have been lately Tempted with a new Assault from Hell, violently made upon me. I am assaulted with Sollicitations to look upon the whole Christian Religion, as -- (I dare not mention, what!)"[3] Still later, he writes, "My Mind is buffeted with horrible Temptations to the Paulician Heresy."[4] Mather's wide reading doubtless disposed him to this type of wavering, just as his medical knowledge made him a hypochondriac. He felt, however, that there was a Satanic energy behind false teaching which sought to overmaster and seduce the mind, and make it into an instrument for the utterance of lies which would dishonor the Creator.

> Suggestions of Infidelity are very frequently such, as have plainly some Immediate Energy of Evil Spirits in them. The Thoughts which carry Blasphemies against a Risen Savior, and His Glorious Gospel

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[1] C. Mather, Parentator (Boston, 1724), p. 26.

[2] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 475 (April, 1703).

[3] Ibid., 3 (March 1709).

[4] Ibid., 282 (February, 1714).

> in them, are frquently, Shot into the Minds of Men, at Such Seasons, and with such impetuous Envy, and into Minds which such a mighty Aversion for them, and so Exquisitely, so Dolorously, so Intolerably wounded, when these Fiery Darts are stuck into them, that some External Cause, and yet a Rational One, must needs be active in the Inflicting of them. They can be no other than some Evil Spirits, the way of which Serpents on the Rock is unknown unto us, that infest and harass our Minds with the Thoughts which blaspheme the Gospel of a Risen Savior.[1]

Even if there is no response to such temptation in the soul under attack -- and in the heat of the assault it is hard to test this -- the Devil, in accord with his character as an accuser, will endeavor to discourage and oppress the soul with the fear that it is guilty, for "it is often with Godly men, as it was with Josephs Brethren; A Vile Thought is laid in the Soul of these, as the Lost Cup was in their Sack of old. The Devil then Charges them with it; And such is the Tenderness of their Conscience, that they own, 'Tis indeed so; I have been a Blasphemer."[2] The soul under such affliction should endeavor to discern the hidden strategy in this assault, and contradict it by crying to God in prayer:

> Don't give way to Despondencies, because of these grievous and hideous Exercises. They are Common to man; Yea, to Good men; They are such as may befall the Best of Men. God will not Lay them to your Charge, if like a Chaste Soul under a Rape, you Cry out unto Him.[3]
>
> If the Devil fall to Barking in your Ears, any Ill thing of the God whom you Fear and Love, drown the Noise of that Cerberus, with a Cry to the LORD Himself, that shall have in it some Acknowledgement of His Glorious Excellencies.[4]

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[1] C. Mather, Reason Satisfied and Faith Established (Boston, 1712), p. 28; cf. Batteries upon the Kingdom of the Devil (London, 1695); Manuductio ad Ministerium (Boston, 1726), p. 49; Zalmonah (Boston, 1725), p. 47.

[2] C. Mather, The Armour of Christianity (Boston, 1704), p. 204.

[3] C. Mather, Reason Satisfied and Faith Established (Boston, 1712), p. 28.

[4] C. Mather, The Armour of Christianity (Boston, 1704), p. 208.

The fears and worries to which modern thought would assign a psychological cause were, for Mather, all part of the invisible conflict. He did admit that somatic factors had some part in spiritual depression, as he experienced in his own case:

> My Health is overthrown, and my Spleen especially so disordered, that Satan getts into it: And now my Mind, is horribly buffeted with Temptations, which tell mee, that being unable to do any further Service, and unworthy that God should help mee to do any, I shall fall into an unserviceable old-Age, before I am forty years old. It is impossible for mee, to express the sad Thoughts which now distress mee, and confound, mee, and how much I am unhinged with them.[1]

On the other hand, he felt that demonic attacks could sometimes come in the form of physical illness such as migraine,[2] and he believed that actual Satanic possession was responsible for much mental illness,[3] which might therefore be cured by exorcism accomplished through prolonged prayer.[4] He observed that it was common knowledge that the Devil attacked men especially in their dying hour, when they were physically most susceptible and spiritually closest to ultimate victory.[5]

In his early years, Mather unguardedly expressed a great many sentiments on the spiritual combat which cannot even appeal to biblical texts for support. As Calef correctly pointed out, he and the other Puritan ministers allowed far too much autonomy to the powers of darkness, assuming that God's providence was so permissive as to allow enchantments and counterfeit miracles, and even the ratification by demons of curses casually uttered by human beings.[1] But Mather rather readily outgrew much of this, admitting even in 1693 that the real strategy of the Devil in the witchcraft scandal had been to precipitate all parties into passions, mistakes, and "enormous disorders;" and remarking that "we have been in an Egyptian Darkness, buffeted by evil Angels, and buffeting one another upon the Impulse of those Angels."[2] He retained his faith in demonic agency, but grew more sophisticated in his interpretation of its strategy. During most of the rest of his life, his handling of the subject of spiritual conflict was consistent with the main body of Christian tradition behind him, and not untrue to the surface meaning of the biblical witness. Whether we are to reinterpret all of this material now in terms of purely psychological explanations is still an open question. It must be said, however, that the Puritan analysis of the negative factors in Christian experience, which balanced off somatic, psychological, and demonic elements in their interrelationship with the problems of sanctification and indwelling sin, was much more complex than the vestigial memories of our folk-religion indicate, and somehow more biblically satisfying than modern reductionist extremes. The Puritan and Counter-Reformation physicians of the soul would, after all, be just as surprised to find us learning pastoral counselling from secular psychology, as we are to find them engaged in exorcism.

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[1] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 285-6 (January, 1699). J. T. McNeill notes the presence of a psychosomatic approach to spiritual problems of this nature in Perkins and David Dickson; vide A History of the Cure of Souls (New York, 1951), p. 188.

[2] Ibid., II (New York, 1957), 99; cf. Wonders of the Invisible World (Boston, 1693), p. 52.

[3] C. Mather, Batteries upon the Kingdom of the Devil (London, 1695), p. 11.

[4] C. Mather, Several Sermons Concerning Walking with God (Boston, 1689).

[5] C. Mather, Memorials of Early Piety (Boston, 1711), pp. 40 ff.; Nunc Dimitis (Boston, 1709), p. 14 . Pourrat notes this as a common element in traditional understanding of spiritual conflict (vide Christian Spirituality, tr. by W. H. Mitchell and S. P. Jacques, III [Westminster, Md., 1953], 368).

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[1] C. Mather, Wonders of the Invisible World (Boston, 1693), pp. 49-57.

[2] C. Mather, The Day, and the Work of the Day (Boston, 1693), p. 65.

CHAPTER VI

MISSION: THE EXPRESSION OF PIETY

1. Cotton Mather Considered as a Pre-Revivalist

The mission strategy of the first and second generations of Puritans in America was based on a theocratic model of the church taken directly from Geneva and ultimately from Old Testament sources. Though they were held up as paragons of spirituality by their descendents, the founders responded to spiritual dulness and cultural decline with a nervous effort to secure the rule of the saints which did not lead to revival but only to deeper stagnation. The relentless lament of the Jeremiad has a deadening as well as a saddening impact, because its analysis of spiritual decline does not issue in calm and vigorous assertion of the good news combined with an exhortation to repentance, but only in a tired recourse to the old machinery of theocratic legalism. Roger Williams saw clearly to the root of theological failure in the first generation's misinterpretation of the relation between the church under the Old Covenant and under the New, and called for a new strategy, but the New England fathers were unable to hear the truth in his message through the static of his eccentricities.[1]

But in the mission strategy of nineteenth-century Revivalism, a wholly new pattern supplanted the old theocratic mold. Disestablished and thrust back on 'gospel weapons' instead of the instruments of civil compulsion, the churches (now transformed into 'denominations') returned to the leavening strategy of the church in Acts.[1] They saw themselves as active cells within the whole society, seeking to reach and change both its members and its structures through the vigorous witness and influence of whole bodies of lay believers, instead of relying only on the fiat of leaders. The mood of the Jeremiad was replaced by the mood of Pentecost, or at least by prayerful waiting for the movement of the Spirit in the new Pentecost of revival. The response to cultural decline or social evil was not direct reform by the magistrate, but moral crusade conducted by voluntary reforming societies assembled across denominational lines. In this concluding chapter we shall observe that there is not one of these emphases which is not clearly articulated by Mather, who assumed the role of John the Baptist with respect to the coming Revivalism.[2]

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[1] Cf. Mauro Calamandrei, "Neglected Aspects of Roger Williams' TThought," Church History, XXI (1952), 239-58.

It is obvious that this understanding of Mather as a pre-Revivalist can only be defended if we can separate the concept of 'revivalism' from the methodology of mass meetings, with which it is too often almost exclusively identified. Large meetings to reach the alienated and the unchurched were an almost accidental invention of John Wesley, who was forced out of the local church into the fields by a fortunate burst of clerical resistance to his reformulation of the Puritan tradition. The Awakening in Edwards' church and in the Middle Colonies of America took place with little resort to mass meetings, though Whitefield's visits consolidated, made visible, and augmented its fruits. The 'Second Awakening' at the time of Timothy Dwight was closely identified with charismatic figures in whom a modified Puritan experientialism had become deeply operative, but it was not anchored to any single type of meeting. While the growing urban crisis in the nineteenth century pointed increasingly to the mass meeting as a major remedy for the loss of parish contact with city masses, revivals took place also in the parish ministry under leaders like the Chalmers in Scotland, and even where there was initially no itinerant charismatic leadership (as in the Prayer Revival of 1857, where the focal centers were ecumenical lay prayer meetings). In every one of the periods which we designate as 'Awakenings' there was some employment, at times and in certain places, of mass meetings; but as Joaçhim Wach points out, revivalism is essentially a pietistic phenomena which is not anchored as to any specific techniques, and which does not necessarily produce organizational residua, but which transforms the spirit of existing organizations.[1] Trinterud notes that the Middle Colonies Awakening was 'a very different sort of revivalism': there were no protracted meetings or even extended periods of services, the work was confined to stated services; there was no anxious bench or its equivalent; personal counselling at some depth, and systematic home visitation, were emphasized; home nurture was strongly emphasized; and sudden conversions were rare. It appears that the first Awakening, in America at least, was essentially a pastoral revival, in which new life was breathed into the old message and methods.[1]

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[1] This is not to deny that even today we are haunted by remnants of theocratic thinking which are inconsistent with the basic shift in strategy. On the persistence of theocratic response in American Christianity, _vide_ Sidney E. Mead, "From Coercion to Persuasion," _Church History_, XXIV (1956), 317-337.

[2] In order to see the full significance of Mather's position in relation to nineteenth-century evangelicalism, we should however recognize that Revivalism with its attendant system of voluntary societies was not a local phenomenon in 'activist' America or even in the Anglo-Saxon world, but that the Evangelical Awakening in the nineteenth century spread essentially the same message by remarkably similar methods throughout the western world. _Vide_ J. H. Nichols, _History of Christianity, 1650-1950_ (New York, 1956), pp. 135-162.

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[1] Joachim Wach, Sociology of Religion (Chicago, 1944), p. 159.

But if the common denominator of all 'revivalism' is not the 'revival meeting,' or even the charismatic revivalist, what are the determinants of the genus which can be found in all its species? Are there any essential factors in all revivals of religion which would make it possible for a participant in one awakening -- Edwards, for example -- to detect a family likeness in other leaders and their movements, even where these are as far from Edwardsean Puritanism as Finney and D. L. Moody? One way of answering this question is to point to the evident fact that every movement commonly designated as a spiritual awakening is radically related either to the Pietist or Puritan traditions, and often to both. Actually all of the subsequent branches in the revivalist family tree meet in a fitful but quite real harmony at the time of the Great Awakening, like relatives who are uncomfortable with one another's eccentricities but aware of common kinship and responsibility to one another: Calvinist Puritans like Whitefield and Edwards and the Tennants, Arminians like Wesley, and Pietists like Frelinghuysen and the Moravians. In subsequent periods when the awakened church has returned to slumber, these may have been at one another's throats; but in every subsequent awakening they have been roused to a sometimes uneasy and reluctant awareness of kinship and the need to cooperate in the work of spiritual renewal.

But what are the genetic insignia which all members of the genus share? I suggest that the common factors are present in the biblical prototype to which every revivalist sooner or later refers as the model for his experience: the early chapters of the Acts. While the Reformation in its Calvinist form was primarily an adaptation of the pattern of revival demonstrated in the Old Testament accounts of theocratic kings such as Hezekiah and Josiah, the later Revivalism transferred to a formulation of the Christian message and a nontheocratic strategy which can be drawn from the first 'awakening' of the church described in Acts 2. The essential elements of Revivalism contained in this chapter and its context are as follows:

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[1] L. Trinterud, The Forming of an American Tradition (Philadelphia, 1949), p. 76.

1. A message combining, in paradoxical tension and with searching application, stress on God's grace (specifically the provision of justification through faith in Jesus Christ, and on man's response (faith, repentance, conversion, sanctification).[1]

2. A conception of the church's task as that of leavening society by witness and action within it, rather than by dominating it in the Judaic or post-Constantinian fashion; with the continuous improvisation of appropriate methods through which to accomplish this.[2]

3. The presence of a strong and widespread sense of need for the Holy Spirit's empowering in order to realize the transformation of persons and of culture, over and above what can be achieved by the mere dissemination of a theological message, or the use of improved methods;[3] and the implementation of this concern in prayer.[4]

Employing this definition, we can discern a nascent revivalism developing in the early English Puritanism and in the pre-Pietistic stream

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[1] Acts 2:14-40, especially vs. 37-40.

[2] Acts 1:7, 8; cf. Luke 13:18-20.

[3] Luke 24-49, Acts 2:4, 5, 8.

[4] Acts 1:14; 2:1; 4:24 ff.; 13:2; etc.

stream from Bucer and Arndt onwards. We can understand outbreaks of spiritual awakening under Baxter at Kidderminster, Stoddard at Northampton, and the Pietists in Germany, as all part of the revivalist stream; and we can see that the Great Awakening itself is not an entirely new phenomenon, but simply a great damming up of this stream so that its extensive penetration into history is greater. Our contention is that there is a 'great tradition' of experiential Christianity which runs like a burning fuse through history since Pentecost, and which encounters from time to time historical situations where time, and place, and sociopolitical conditions, and men's hearts, and divine Providence all combine to produce an explosive broadening of the church in history which we call an 'awakening.' In the rest of this chapter we shall endeavor to place Mather within this 'great tradition.' We have already shown in the preceding sections of this work that Mather fulfills the first of these criteria, since his message is essentially identical with the thrust of earlier Puritan and Pietist awakenings, and with the common elements in the various strands combining in the later Great Awakening. It remains to be proved that he satisfies the second and third conditions.

2. Mather and the Local Pastorate

A. The Renovation of Old Methods

A large part of Mather's response to New England's spiritual crisis involved, as usual, the adaptation of methods and ministries already in use, or simply the effort to deepen, refine, and energize these through the application of 'methods of piety.' This is completely natural, considering that Mather's innately conservative temperament operates in a tradition in which he is anchored to a rather steady, if confining, divine-right scriptural outline of what the ordinary methods of the church should be. Unlike our younger contemporary theologians, facing a comparable spiritual problem in the culture but unsupported by any conviction of a fixed ministerial order laid down in the New Testament, he is not about to dismantle the old machinery of the church to meet new occasions.

Consequently Mather's solution to the problem of renewal still centers around the basic stated meetings of the church, conducted for worship (as on the sabbath) or purely for biblical edification (as in the weekly lecture). In both instances it is assumed that the principle agent in spiritual nourishment and awakening is the ministry of the Word of God, and thus long bouts of preaching and teaching are still the basic protein of Mather's ministry. Much of the energies of his pastoral work are invested in preparation for these.

> I am apprehensive, that the chief Work I have to do is to preach the Gospel of my Saviour. And it calls for my first Thoughts; the clearest, and brightest Exercises of my intellectual Powers. . . . By . . . ordering my Studies, I may not only have my Sermons very seasonably prepared and finished, but I may also gett ready beforehand a Collection of Treasures for all Occasions.[1]

While earlier Puritan worship had included literally hours of preaching and pastoral prayer at a given service, it was Mather's custom (or at least his counsel) to hold a sermon to one hour in length, or a little over.[2] Even this length seems incredible to the modern imagination; but apart from such usually mentioned factors as the lack of other entertainment, the congregation could put up with sermons this long simply because Mather and other Puritans conscientiously put a great deal of time into studying for them during the week, and the result was a great deal of meat combined with a masterful sauce. Compared to the modern ministerial schedule, Mather's resembles that of an eremitical scholar, a kind of utopia for Christian humanists. "Our Time is to be by far the most of it, Spent Alone," he says, "Separating our selves that we may intermeddle with all Wisdom"; [1] "God will Curse that Man's Labors who Lumbers up and down in the World all the Week, and then upon Saturday, in the Afternoon, goes to his Study; whereas GOD knows, that Time were little enough to Pray and Weep in, and get his Heart into a fit Frame for the Duties of the approaching Sabbath."[2] His father's weekly regimen, which he lists in the Parentator, had been almost entirely consumed in the reading of commentaries, biblical study for the sermon, and other types of reading -- "only allowance must be given for visitations and necessary avocations, which cannot be foreseen."[3] His own schedule is deducible from a specimen account from his twentieth year; he describes a typical day in which he began by reading scripture and praying, examined his children, read Descartes and commentaries, breakfasted, worked on his sermon, engaged in family prayer, heard his pupils recite, read Salmon

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[1] C. Mather, Diary, II (New York, 1957), 369 (August, 1716).

[2] C. Mather, Ratio Disciplinae (Boston, 1726), p. 58. G. R. Cragg describes English Puritan meetings for worship, during the period from 1660-1688, which lasted from three to five hours, with sermons up to three and one half hours in length (Puritanism in the Period of the Great Persecution, 1660-1688 [Cambridge, England, 1957], pp. 161, 213). Miss Winslow unaccountably states that no sermon of Mather's period was less

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than two hours in length and most were longer (O. E. Winslow, Meetinghouse Hill, 1630-1783 [New York, 1952], p. 91). But the spiritual decline seems to have dampened the famous Puritan appetite for sermons throughout the lifetime of the third generation; at least, the Ratio Disciplinae must be assumed to speak for all the Boston ministers.

[1] C. Mather, The Minister (Boston, 1722), p. 37.

[2] Ibid., p. 33.

[3] C. Mather, Parentator (Boston, 1724), p. 38.

on medicine, dined, visited friends, read some more in various books, worked more on the sermon, heard pupils recite again, meditated and prayed, supped, worked again on the sermon, and took part in family prayer.[1] This amount of preparatory labor is not surprising when we consider that Mather rarely preached less than twice a week, and at times as often as four times.[2] His standards for solid preaching were also extremely high. He recommended that the pastor carefully study in advance to preach to all varieties and ages in his congregation, especially the young, applying the content of the sermon to each spiritual condition present and not resting simply in a detailed doctrinal exposition.[3] The sermon should also be furnished with appropriate anecdotes if these can be delivered with a "deliberate, expressive, unstumbling brevity."[4] However the construction of the sermon is only a part of the time-consuming labor that must go into it; a considerable part of its success will depend on how the minister has worked its material into his own heart and experience through prayer and porismatic meditation.[5]

> Sirs, If you would be Men of GOD, you must be Men of Prayer . . . Those that have been most Eminent for Fasting alone, have been most Eminent for Feeding the multitude. Verily, such whole Days leave a serious, cautious, composed and Heavenly Savour on the Mind, and produce, though a very lowly Mind of one always lying in the Dust, yet a certain Grandeur of Mind, in those that are used unto them . . . Such whole Days will fetch down all sorts of Blessings upon, and render you uncommon Blessings unto, those whom you are to bear on your Hearts continually.[6]

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[1] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 72 (September, 1683); cf. Barrett Wendell, Cotton Mather (New York, 1891), p. 54n.

[2] R. and L. Boas, Cotton Mather (New York, 1928), p. 161.

[3] C. Mather, Bonifacius (Boston, 1710), pp. 92-3; Diary, II (New York, 1957), 88 (July, 1711).

[4] C. Mather, Manuductio ad Ministerium (Boston, 1726), pp. 104-145.

[5] Ibid., pp. 91, 104-5.

[6] C. Mather, The Minister (Boston, 1722), p. 39.

Near the end of his life, Mather describes the goal of preaching in a passage expressing typical Puritan aims in Continental Pietist terminology:

> Exhibit unto them, the Desires of PIETY, in such a Manner, that they must have their Hearts burn within them, & they must be Hearts of Stone indeed, if they take not Fire immediately. When you also describe the Graces of the New Creature, give the Description in the Language of PIETY, acting those Graces; Wherein, if they come into a Consort with you, their Souls are gained unto GOD, at the very Moment of your Instructing them. Oh! That you may be a Wise Winner of Souls! And while you are Preaching, may the Holy SPIRIT fall on them that hear the Word! . . . Try . . . to set the Truths on Fire, before you part with any Head that you are upon; and let them come Flaming out of your Hand with Excitations to some Devotion and Affection of Godliness, into the Hearts of those whom they are address'd unto. The Tongues with which the Holy SPIRIT made His Descent, on the first and best Preachers of the Gospel that ever were in the World, were Flames, and had the Appearance of an Heavenly Fire upon them.[1]

In the actual delivery of the sermon, Mather favored a very free and limited usage of notes, rather than the reading of a manuscript or its delivery from memory.[2] Ideally, preaching was to be accompanied by a constant ejaculatory prayer for its penetration into the hearts of its hearers, and embedded in an immense background of pastoral prayer led publicly during the service. Mather felt that the prayer was a vital adjunct of the sermon, for "Whatever Truths we are singularly desirous to have Inculcated upon them . . . we may work these Truths into our Prayers, powerful Efficacy from Heaven upon them."[3] Mather's own pastoral prayer had a way of extending itself to remarkable lengths at times -- once to two hours, which necessitated a public apology from the pastor to the numbed congregation.[4]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 104-5.

[2] C. Mather, The Minister (Boston, 1722), p. 34.

[3] Ibid., p. 26.

[4] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 531 (January, 1705/6).

As for the material content of the sermon, Mather was in favor of a planned curriculum of preaching flavored with some intermingling of topical subjects from time to time; but this curriculum was to be doctrinally determined rather than set by the consecutive exposition of large bodies of scripture. "The whole _body of Divinity_ should in the Course of our Ministry, be gone through; And the more in Order, the better. So we shall _Declare the whole Counsel of GOD_."[1] Evidently Mather did frequently preach short series of sermons on texts lying together in a limited passage of scripture; but he remarked that he still preserved "a Liberty, usually every other Lord's Day, to discourse on _occasional Subjects_; and for my Direction in these, I consider the particular Conditions, Occurrences, Temptations, of the Flock; and endeavour as well as I can to suit them with the Word of God."[2] At times he would consult the people or his deacons to determine what subjects they would like him to preach upon.[3] But in all this his effort was to keep to the central themes which he felt were vital to the nurture of Christian experience in his people.

Most of Mather's time was thus occupied with study, either in connection with his sermons, or to fill out his erudition for his literary labors. We have already seen that he spent considerable time also in personal and private devotions. It also occurred to him, however, to pray specifically over the needs of his congregation. At the outset of his ministry, he noted that he kept "a _Catalogue_ of all the _Communicants_ belonging unto our church, and in my secret Prayers, I would sometimes go over this Catalogue, by Parcels at a Time, upon my Knees; praying for the most suitable Blessings I can think of, to bee bestow'd on each Person, by Name distinctly mentioned."[1] Some twenty-five years later he refers to this practice as if it had long fallen into disrepair: "I would renew my ancient Care of the Flock in this one Point."[2] We have no way of knowing how regular Mather was in his specific petitions for the members of his flock, but he seems to have found it a thing which did not come very naturally and was hard to keep up. It is rather suggestive that there are very few statements of pastoral concerns for individuals recorded in the diaries of Mather, except when these are the objects of Mather's charity or his annoyance. One suspects that Mather valued his congregation more en masse, as an audience, and less as an aggregate of individuals with spiritual needs or exceptional promise.

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[1] C. Mather, _The Minister_ (Boston, 1722), pp. 27-8.

[2] C. Mather, _Diary_, I (New York, 1957), 539 (February, 1705-6).

[3] _Ibid_., II (New York, 1957), 547 (July, 1718); 576 (December, 1718).

Since Puritan evangelism employed a 'waiting period' of supplication to effect conversion, instead of the immediate decision of Arminian Revivalism, Mather did not make use of any evangelistic machinery in the course of his preaching services.[3] He did however suggest on many occasions another tool which the prospective convert could use privately to conclude his process of conversion: the written covenant. This was no innovation, but a settled part of Puritan tradition,[4] and Mather made particular use of it at the beginning of his ministry. Here is the earliest example in his writings:

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[1] Ibid., I (New York, 1957), 108 (January, 1685/6).

[2] Ibid., II (New York, 1957), 43 (February, 1710/11).

[3] The 'sawdust trail' and 'altar call' of post-Moody Revivalism are perfect instrumental reflections of the difference between Puritan and Arminian evangelism, Finney's 'anxious bench' is a transitional method, in essence an abbreviated time of 'waiting' which was designed to produce Arminian results while appeasing Calvinists with a gesture toward divine sovereignty.

[4] Mather attributes the method particularly to the Alleines, Janeway, and Guthrie (Memorials of Early Piety [Boston, 1711], p. 11). Mather later instroduced one innovation, however: the invention of an

> I Renounce all the *Vanities* and *Idols* of this World. I engage that I will cleave unto the Lord *Jehovah*, as my *Best Good*, and my *Last End*; promising to live *upon* Him, and *unto* Him, hoping to live ere long *with* Him for ever. I Engage, That I will cling unto the Lord *Jesus*, as my *Prophet*, and my *Priest*, and my *King*; Promising to acknowledge Him as the Auther of all my Salvation. I Engage, That I will first study what is my *Duty* in these things; and wherein I find myself to fall short, I will ever count it my *Grief*, my *Shame*, and for pardon betake my self to the Blood of the Everlasting Covenant. All this I Engage, humbly imploring the *Grace* of the Mediator to be *sufficient* for me. It would hurt no Godly man, to *set* his *Name*, with Hand and Heart to such an Instrument; afterwards frequently Reflecting on it, frequently Renewing of it.

By the second decade of the new century, however, Mather had come to second thoughts about the use of covenant forms.

> *Forms* have been used by Thousands, with honest minds, and have been of great use unto them. Yet, I verily think, a Glorious CHRIST, *as the Head of His People in the Covenant of God*, has not always been duly considered in these *Forms*. And hence, though the persons that used them have been *Real Converts*, yet God has often left them unto sad *Falls*, after they have entered into *Covenant*. It has been to show them, how *feeble* they are, how *nothing* they are; how displeased He is, to see the least Air of the *Covenant of Works*, in our Transactions with Him; and to chase us away unto our only Saviour.

Mather is bold enough to object to the received Puritan teaching on this subject.

> The Form used by those Men of God, is hardly quite Evangelical enough. I would propose, that the Nature of the New Covenant, which is all over, Grace, Grace; be thoroughly considered by them who do this Action; and that the Terms of, I Confess, and, I Consent, and, I Desire, be preferred, unto, I Will; as Language best Suiting the Nature & the Tenour of a Covenant, in which, tis not by Doing, but by Receiving, that we arrive unto Blessedness, and that our Holy

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"Instrument of Resignation" for the promotion of this technique of mortification (*A Good Old Age* [Boston, 1726], pp. 40-42).

[1] C. Mather, *Small Offers* (Boston, 1689), p. 25.

[2] C. Mather, *Pastoral Desires* (Boston, 1712), p. 22.

> Resolutions be form'd, as points of Thankfulness to the Lord from whom we Receive the Gift of Righteousness, and as parts of our Promised Blessedness; and the style thereof be, O my God, I ask of thee, that thou wilt give me the Grace to do such and such things![1]

Thus, by the end of his life, Mather's suggested covenant is very brief and thoroughly evangelical in its hypercalvinist way: "So set thy Hand, (even that Withered Hand) with thy Heart, unto this acknowledgment. O my Great SAVIOUR, I consent by thy Help, I consent unto it, That thou bring me into the Peace of GOD, and that thou fill me with the Love of GOD, that thou save me to the Uttermost."[2] Nevertheless, in his final great summary of the New England Way, Mather goes on record in favor not only of this practice, but also the recurrent renewal of personal, church, and national covenants, those heavily theocratic 'sacraments' which New England had developed.[3]

A very similar judgment might be given on Mather's understanding and practice of pastoral care. His father had no regular time during the week scheduled for pastoral visits, only undertaking these as occasions arose which demanded them; and he had been criticized for neglecting these in favor of his studies.[4] The younger Mather however set out at the beginning of his ministry to reserve one afternoon per week (generally Thursday) for such visits by appointment.[5] He was able to visit anywhere from one to four families per week in this manner, talking to the adults with "as handsome and pungent Addresses as I was able

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[1] C. Mather, Memorials of Early Piety (Boston, 1711), p. 11.

[2] C. Mather, The Quickened Soul (Boston, 1720), p. 30.

[3] C. Mather, Ratio Disciplinae (Boston, 1726), pp. 178-9.

[4] C. Mather, Parentator (Boston, 1724), p. 182.

[5] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 55 (March, 1682/3).

. . . particularly about their everlasting Interests; and the young People I still asked some Questions of the Catechism, from the Answers whereof I made as lively Applications unto them as I could."[1] This itinerant catechetical ministry had been the heart of Baxter's suprising success in the parish at Kidderminster, and Mather indicates that this and other elements in The Reformed Pastor had a profound effect on his own ministry.[2] He also justifies the practice from Patristic examples -- Augustine and Clemens Alexandrinus -- and from the practice in the time of the Reformation, noting that even Rome and the Jews have adopted the technique.[3] In his later writings for ministerial candidates he unhesitatingly advises catechizing as a vital part of an awakening ministry:

> Your Sermons, tho' never so well-composed Meat-Offerings for the House of your God, will be very much lost, upon an Uncatechized People: Or, as our Flayel Expresses it; All your Excellent Sermons, will be dashed to pieces on the Rock of your People's Ignorance . . . There have been Thousands, who have used very Great Labors in Catechizing, and have given very Great Praises unto God, for the Successes that have attended them. Nor have the Consolations of a Walk with God . . . more accompanied them, in any part of their Ministry, than when they have been Going about from house to house, to do this good, among their People.[4]

In many instances Mather evidently felt the catechetical framework for the visit more suitable for the children, and simply endeavored to engage the adults directly in conversation about their spiritual interests, or sound them out to determine their current condition.[1] In one of his late writings Mather gives a very full list of subjects to be enquired after on such visits: the regeneration of family members; special temptations interfering with godliness; financial wellbeing; vocational direction (together with occasional reflections on the circumstances of various calling); duties to relatives; family devotions; warning against wicked company; the conversion of servants; exhortation of those neglecting the Lord's Table; and general encouragement to adhere to the church. It was Mather's practice to leave a scripture passage for the man of the house if not present -- the indication seems to be that Mather did not regularly deal with the heads of households but only with the women and children.[2]

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[1] Ibid., 114 (February, 1685/6).

[2] Cf. Ibid., II (New York, 1957), 498 (January, 1717/18). Mather speaks here of reviewing again the Gildas Salvianus of Baxter. Baxter himself spent seven hours per week in catechizing, and attributed more success to this than to all his public ministry (Hugh Martin, Puritanism and Richard Baxter [London, 1954], p. 150).

[3] C. Mather, The Man of God Furnished (Boston, 1708), pp. 1-3.

[4] Ibid., pp. 14-15. Francke was an equally dedicated proponent of catechizing; vide A. H. Guericke, The Life of A. H. Francke, tr. by Samuel Jackson (London, 1847), pp. 85-7.

Very frequently Mather distributed tracts on the subject of regeneration or spiritual growth, usually copies of his own writings, during these visits: he remarked that "Usually I give away half a dozen Books, more or less, every Day that I make them,"[3] and that he distributed "I suppose, at least *six hundred Books* in a Year."[4] We have already commented on the efflorescence of *Erbauungsliteratur* in the first great period of Puritanism. From the beginning a large proportion of this material was employed for pastoral distribution, and aimed largely at the unconverted. Like Francke,[5] Mather was very eager to reinforce his visits by leaving a continuing literary echo of piety in the household; but he seems to have been careful to insure that the voice which echoed was his own. In his earlier career Mather recommends to the laity the distribution of such tracts;[1] his later works on the office of the pastorate do not mention the subject, probably out of a nervous modesty in the face of those critics who accused him of a mania for scribbling. But the practice was doubtless widespread among ministers, and it is interesting that in the Great Awakening it becomes one of the more popular instruments for bringing revival.[2]

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[1] C. Mather, *The Rules of a Visit* (Boston, 1705), p. 14.

[2] C. Mather, *A Brief Memorial of Matters and Methods for Pastoral Visits* (Boston, 1723), *passim*.

[3] C. Mather, *Diary*, I (New York, 1957), 518 (June, 1705).

[4] *Ibid*., 548 (February, 1705/6).

[5] Rezeau Brown, *Memoirs of A. H. Francke* (Philadelphia, 1831), p. 65.

There is every evidence that Mather found his pastoral visits extremely rewarding. It is also clear that he found them uniquely difficult to keep up, "a Service wherein I enjoy a strange Presence and Conduct of Heaven, but go thro' very spending Labour."[3] The diaries are littered with admissions of slackness in visitation and resolutions of reform.[4] As his ministry went on, he seems to have had a deepening sense of the importance of this work, and of his own difficulty in doing it. There was an evident struggle taking place in his mind between the demands of the pastoral ministry and the delights of study and literary labor. Though it was his counsel and practice to make every conversation serviceable to the interests of piety, he still observes,

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[1] C. Mather, The Nets of Salvation (Boston, 1704), pp. 47-8.

[2] L. Trinterud, The Forming of an American Tradition (Philadelphia, 1949), p. 182.

[3] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 368 (October, 1700).

[4] Ibid., 168 (August, 1693); 201 (July, 1696); 304 (June, 1699); 319 (October, 1699); II (New York, 1957), 24 (February, 1709/10); 86 (July, 1711); 230 (August, 1713); 334 (February, 1715/16); 352 (May, 1716).

> I am afraid, lest while I am conversing with my Neighbors, (tho' it be alwayes with the Intentions of doing some Good unto them) I may, ere I am aware, be betray'd into some Degree of Slothfulness, which may be a Prejudice unto my greater Usefulness. Wherefore, when I am abroad among my Neighbours, I would often putt that Question to myself, Would it not be more pleasing unto my glorious Lord, that I should be in my Study at this Time? If I find myself in a Temper and Vigour to be carrying on greater Services in my Study, I would break off the most agreeable Conversation, and fly thither, with a Zeal of redeeming the Time, upon me.[1]

Considering Mather's mammoth appetite for scholarship and his desire for literary fame, it is unlikely that he often felt himself in any other 'Temper and Vigour' when he posed this question. It was not only that he hesitated to pursue 'cold contacts' and preferred to have those really desirous of spiritual counselling contact him at his home, as was the case with Edwards; on the contrary, the sign in his study, "BE SHORT," is famous. It seems entirely probable that Mather lacked a vivid understanding of what could be achieved in the way of spiritual growth through pastoral counselling on a deep and extended personal level, and aimed too low in his nurture of the life of the congregation, while he aimed very high at a more distant sort of outreach through literature -- one which had attached to it the rewards of notoriety. In this connection we should note again that the original awakening which produced the Puritan movement in England was primarily moved by the experience of pastors like Greenham and Rogers in personal spiritual counselling,[2] and that an important factor in the Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies was an increase in such conferences and in systematic home visitation.[1] If we were to single out a single factor to explain the lack of continual and widespread awakening under Mather's ministry it might well be this one, which may also be part of the explanation for the miscarriage of the revival under Edwards' later ministry.

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[1] Ibid., II (New York, 1957), 48 (March, 1710/11).

[2] I. Morgan, The Godly Preachers of the Elizabethan Church (London, 1965), pp. 119-20.

B. The Adoption of New Methods

Cotton Mather was in no sense a creative inaugurator of strategic methods and theological emphases which would shape the future, but he did have an uncanny responsiveness to the new ideas of others which were in the main line of future church development. He was a condenser, not a generator: he did not initiate new programs to meet the spiritual crisis in New England and the rest of the world, but he did have an open and eager receptivity to the emergency measures of others. By a process of collection, he assembled piecemeal from more original minds in England and Germany a blueprint of post-theocratic strategy which forecast with remarkable accuracy the program which the American churches were to adopt a century later. He was not solely responsible for the shape of that future program; but he did import and plant in America all the seeds, the radical germinal motifs, which were already operating in Western Christendom and would combine to produce nineteenth-century evangelicalism.

One of the salient differences between the Protestantism of the nineteenth century and that of earlier periods was the growing role of the laity in personal witness, culminating in the lay revival of 1857 and the ultimate success of the great evangelist who was a layman, D. L. Moody. Despite the theoretical groundwork for this development laid in Luther's concept of the priesthood of all believers, neither the Lutheran nor the Reformed branches of Christendom really developed a practical ministry of the laity during most of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. English Puritanism did concentrate quite seriously upon the spiritual nurture of the individual believer, but it usually represented this as a process to be supervised by spiritual experts, principally the clergy. The Georges insist that in both Anglican and Puritan circles laymen did not write from a consistently Protestant viewpoint in the early seventeenth century, and that the failure to convert laymen to a deeply felt Protestant view of life resulted in the tragically rapid disintegration of the Protestant outlook.[1] E. S. Morgan contends that the spiritual concern of the colonizing Puritan fathers in America was concentrated upon dynastic sanctification rather than evangelization of the unchurched in non-covenant lines, so that the Puritan adult felt his sphere of witnessing responsibility was principally limited to his family, servants, and fellow church-members.[2] Perhaps these theories overstate the case -- they are not accurate for such eminent Puritans as

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[1] L. Trinterud, The Forming of an American Tradition (Philadelphia, 1949), p. 76.

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[1] C. H. and K. George, The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation (Princeton, 1961), p. 5.

[2] E. S. Morgan, The Puritan Family, pp. 90 ff. Morgan's rather fascinating theory suggests that the men who were motivated to 'convert the world' -- and the church -- remained in England, and that consequently the Puritans who moved to the New World were a self-selected group of spiritual introverts. They virtually insisted that those wanting salvation should join themselves to a covenant household, because redemption was unlikely to come outside the covenant, since "God casts the line of election in the loins of godly parents." Morgan finds a strong emphasis along these lines in Increase Mather. It is not at all present in Cotton Mather; possibly this is one of those instances in which the son moved in an evangelical direction from his father's position.

Thomas Hooker[1] and Lewis Bayly.[2] At any rate, there does seem to be a greater appearance of concern for lay witness toward the end of the seventeenth century. Spener was under public attack by the clergy-centered Lutheran orthodoxy for encouraging lay witness and the full implementation of Luther's doctrine of the general priesthood,[3] and John McNeill finds a stronger emphasis in this direction in the Mathers and later in Edwards.[4]

At first glance, it appears that in many respects Cotton Mather was still deeply embedded in a theocratic understanding of the parish structure, which did not necessitate the training of any lay 'fishers of men' because most of the fish in the community were directly under the care of pastoral experts. In urging his people to be fruitful, for instance, Mather does not define the bearing of fruit in terms of the winning of souls, as the nineteenth century would, but in terms of personal godliness, acts of piety, loving God and one's neighbor,[5] the careful use of time,[6] and obedience to God.[7]

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[1] Ibid., p. 97.

[2] Stoeffler (The Rise of Evangelical Pietism [Leiden, 1965], p. 73) notes that Bayly's Practice of Piety is pervaded by an almost desperate earnestness concerning 'the winning of other sinful souls unto the faith' by one's words and devout example."

[3] E. Beyreuther, August Hermann Francke und die Anfange der Okumenischen Bewegung (Hamburg-Bergstedt, 1957), p. 42. J. T. McNeill notes that Spener's The Spiritual Priesthood Briefly Set Forth . . . (1677) was probably the origin of the modern stress on the ministry of the laity (A History of the Cure of Souls [New York, 1951], p. 183).

[4] McNeill, op. cit., p. 276.

[5] C. Mather, Agricola (Boston, 1727), pp. 154, 175, 192.

[6] C. Mather, A Good Old Age (Boston, 1726), p. 25.

[7] C. Mather, Virtue in its Verdure (Boston, 1725), pp. 10, 14.

> Fruitfulness is Godliness . . . Piety does in one word express the fruit which God expects from us.[1]
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> A Fruitful Christian is One that Walks in the Fear of God; He makes it His Chief End, to Enjoy God, and Obey Him, and Honor Him; His Chief Care to Do the Things that please God. He governs himself by the Rules that God has given him. He does Realize the Eye of God upon him . . . He is afraid of nothing so much as of doing anything Offensive to God. He often makes this Reflection: Am I now doing what God allows me to do? And, Am I now going where God would have me to go? He keeps a Watch over the very Frames and Thoughts of his Heart, that nothing may be indulged there, which God may be displeased at. A Fruitful Christian is One, who Lives by the faith of the Son of God . . . He Prays unto God . . . He Looks unto JESUS, as the Pattern of his Conversation . . .
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> . . . .
>
> A Fruitful Christian is one who with Diligence and with Discretion Pulls together at both the Oars of his Two Callings; his General and his Personal . . . A Fruitful Christian is One who Studies to carry it well in all the Relations wherein God has Placed him . . . He is also one that loves to do good.[2]

This concept of fruitfulness is remarkably centered on the growth of sanctification in order to the greater glory of God. It is undoubtedly a good balance to the shallow emphasis on an oververbalized concept of 'witness' which practically supplants sanctification in later Revivalist models of the Christian life; and in many respects it is truer to the New Testament, which emphasizes spiritual growth leading to a natural witness of life and word, and not a forced and immature verbal witness. However it is doubtful that the biblical image of fruitfulness is wholly unrelated to the conversion of souls, which seems to be in view in such passages as John 15:1-17, in which Jesus is giving last instructions for the apostolic mission.

There is also a rather suspicious absence of the concept of lay witness in certain sermons throughout Mather's career which suggests that the older pattern of ministerial expertise dominated his thinking much of the time. In A Family Sacrifice (1703) and Benedictus (1715), the Christian is told to do good to others, but no evangelistic thrust is mentioned.[1] In Desiderius (1719) Mather advises his people to pity the unbeliever but abhor him,[2] and in Ecclesiae Monilia (1726) they are urged to shrink from contact with the ungodly;[3] in neither case is there any encouragement to attempt a conversion. A number of sermons encourage the practice of 'brotherly love' among Christians and church members, and even the mutual spiritual awakening of one another, and yet do not couple with this any dynamic of evangelism outside the fold.[4] In The Fisherman's Calling (1712), every conceivable change is rung on the occasional reflections involved in a life of fishing, but the biblical injunctions to disciples to become 'fishers of men' is completely ignored.[5]

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[1] C. Mather, Agricola (Boston, 1727), p. 192.

[2] C. Mather, Pastoral Desires (Boston, 1712), pp. 64, 66-7.

A relatively small number of Mather's works do give a clear-cut call to lay witness, however, and these range over every period in his ministry. In Small Offers (1689) he throws off a few phrases about this subject, embedded in a vast background of other concerns: "The Living here may be praising of God, by Bearing many a Witness to the Truths, and Ways of the Lord Jesus Christ . . . In this life, we may be instrumental to Convince and to Convert Unregenerate Sinners, to build up the Church of the Lord Jesus, and to Do good among the ignorant by an Exemplary Conversation."[6]

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[1] C. Mather, A Family Sacrifice (Boston, 1703), pp. 45-6; Benedictus (Boston, 1715), pp. 30 ff.

[2] C. Mather, Desiderius (Boston, 1719), p. 5.

[3] C. Mather, Ecclesiae Monilia (Boston, 1726), p. 17.

[4] C. Mather, A Faithful Monitor (Boston, 1704); Vigilius (Boston, 1719); Love Triumphant (Boston, 1722).

[5] C. Mather, The Fisherman's Calling (Boston, 1712), passim.

[6] C. Mather, Small Offers (Boston, 1689), p. 111.

In *A Good Master Well Served* (1696), he commands the owners of slaves to value as of first importance the spiritual state of their slaves, and seek their conversion.[1] And Mather observes that the early Christians "followed their Unconverted Neighbors with Importunate and Unwearied *Counsels*: They Instructed them, they Advised them, they *Persuaded* them, to be more than *Almost Christians*."[2] And one work -- a Boston lecture sermon, directed, significantly, to a more selected audience of leaders and willing hearers than the regular Lord's Day service would draw -- deliberates fully on the subject of the witness of the laity. The doctrine of *The Nets of Salvation* (1704) is, "*Those that win Souls are wise*." Quite a bit of the sermon is still given over to the project of getting the souls of Mather's immediate hearers thoroughly won. Near the close of the sermon he does, however, suggest that the Devil and heretics sometimes do more to win souls than Congregational laymen, and proposes the Case: "*What can we do about winning Souls?*" Oddly enough for a Calvinist, Mather appeals to an anthropocentric motive, urging a pitying consideration of the lost sinner, and the setting of a high value on his soul:

> But if that *Soul* go Christless, and Graceless out of the world, it sinks down into such Miseries, that thy Heart is all Stone, O man, if thou art not struck with horror at them; if thou Cry not out . . . Methinks, were we under the Influence of such Thoughts, our Compassion for *Souls*, would make us with some Anguish to groan after the *winning of Souls*.[3]

Mather is probably correct in considering that the main obstacle to an effective ministry among the Boston laity is carelessness of their responsibility for mission:

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[1] C. Mather, *A Good Master Well Served* (Boston, 1696), p. 6ff.. The Georges note that while Perkins devotes much space to the subject of the master's duty to his servants, he shows no great zeal for their conversion (*op. cit.*, p. 204).

[2] C. Mather, *The Good Old Way* (Boston, 1706), p. 47.

[3] C. Mather, *The Nets of Salvation* (Boston, 1704), p. 39.

> Now truly, The very *Propounding* of the Case, is the First, and almost the Chief thing to be done, in the *Answering* of the Case . . . We all of us have our various *Opportunities* to be something in this Lovely work of God . . . Entreat of God, the Father of Lights, That He would by His good Spirit, suggest into your minds, *What you may do for Him*, *& for Souls* . . . Think, and Think again! *Thinking for Souls* is a great step to the *winning of Souls*.[1]

In company with later Revivalists (including even Arminians like Finney), Mather feels that "*Praying for Souls* is a main stroke in the *winning of Souls*. If once the *Spirit of Grace* be poured out upon a *Soul*, that *Soul is won* immediately."[2] From this step, he goes on to recommend, first, uniformly good conduct in Christ as a silent foundation for verbal witness, and finally, open conversation about Christ, and also the distribution of tracts such as his own, which he notes that many in the congregation have used profitably. Although all of this treatment of personal witness is framed strictly within the limits of Boston parish work -- there is an intramural flavor to it, and no great sense of reaching 'outside the camp' to the really distant and 'ungodly' elements of the urban society -- it is still a remarkably exact foreshadowing of the typical emphases of the nineteenth century, including group prayer for the revival of religion among the rising generation and all nations:

> Who can tell, how far the Prayers of the *Saints*, & of a few *Saints*, may *prevail* with Heaven to obtain that *Grace*, that shall win whole *Peoples and Kingdoms to serve the Lord*? *A New Heart* shall one Day be given to the *Israelitish Nation* . . . It may be, the Nations of the world, would quickly be *won* from the Idolatries of *Paganism*, and the Impostures of *Mahomet*, if a *Spirit of Prayer*, were at work among the People of God.[3]

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[1] *Ibid*., pp. 37-8.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 40.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 42.

Still the emphasis on lay witness here is an extremely rare one, considering the vast body of Mather's writing. We must assume that although the notion that laymen could reach others for Christ was present in the seventeenth-century Puritan matrix in which Mather operated, it was a very muted strain. There are a number of possible reasons for this. The pastors had been used to seeing a larger proportion of their parish in church than later generations could expect, and consequently felt that evangelism could best be done by ministerial experts at first hand. Perhaps the doctrine of the sovereignty of God led the ministers to put their main trust in God's awakening sinners and bringing the troubled seekers to them. And while for the Arminian evangelism of the later nineteenth century, conversion was a relatively simple act of commitment which could be elicited by a moderately trained layman, for Puritanism it was a work of surgery which required a specialist. Above all, however, the concept of the homogeneous parish had not yet sufficiently moved toward an unanchored pluralism. The ministers still felt that they, personally, had a grip on the lives in the community, and it was not yet necessary for them to seek a wider purchase through the enlistment of laymen in the evangelistic task.

It has been suggested, however, that another strategy which Mather helped propagate in New England, the use of voluntary religious societies for the spread of piety and the suppression of moral disorders, is just such an attempt to get a grip on a post-theocratic society sliding away from the ministerial control. Miller represents these societies, and their English originals, as "rallyings of the Nonconformist conscience in an effort to recapture, by nonpolitical means, moral territory lost to the Restoration."[1] Along with many earlier authorities, Miller fails to discern the fact that there were two different types of society involved: the 'religious society' intended to build up the spiritual lives of the participants, and similar to the Pietist conventicles or Wesley's group meetings; and the 'reforming society' aiming mainly at the 'suppression of moral disorder' in the surrounding culture, the prototype of most of the voluntary societies of the Benevolent Empire in the nineteenth century.[1] The religious societies of the first type are generally supposed to have originated in London in 1678, beginning as young men's meetings under the directorship of an Anglican, A. W. Horneck, a German expatriate trained at Oxford and originally a Lutheran.[2] But while Horneck may have modelled his society on the Pietist conventicles which Spener introduced in Germany in 1670,[3] his meetings were definitely neither Pietistic nor Puritan in their main thrust, contrary to most authorities, since Horneck's writings are typical of High-church Anglicanism, and stress a sacramental and mystical works-religion devoid of stress on regeneration and the distinctive

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[1] Perry Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), p. 411. In contrast to this estimate, Carl

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Bridenbaugh simply represents Mather's leadership as a good example of civic spirit facing a situation of social decay (Cities in the Wilderness [New York, 1938], pp. 229, 248).

[1] The confusion originates with Josiah Woodward's account of the reforming societies (1701), which sought to make them acceptable to suspicious governmental and clerical authorities by asserting a linkage between the two kinds of society; vide D. W. R. Bahlman, The Moral Revolution of 1688 (New Haven, 1957), p. 92. The confusion was ultimately unravelled by G. V. Portus (Caritas Anglicana [London, 1912]) and J. Wickhamm Legg (English Church Life from the Restoration to the Tractarian Movement [London, 1914]), but still has misled scholars like Miller and Erich Beyreuther (vide the latter's August Hermann Francke und die Anfange der Ökumenische Bewegung [Hamburg-Bergstedt, 1957] , p. 106).

[2] Portus, op. cit., p. 9; Legg, op. cit., p. 300. Earlier attempts by High-church Anglicans to form societies to promote both piety and care for the poor and prisoners had proved abortive, according to Nagler (Pietism and Methodism [Nashville, 1918] , p. 164).

[3] D. W. Brown, "The Problem of Subjectivism in Pietism" (unpublished doctoral thesis, Northwestern University, 1962), p. 207.

Reformation doctrine of justification.[1] Among the early religious societies operating within the established church, the same methodology was used to reinforce several different forms of piety, ranging from a semi-Catholic ritualism to the promotion of "real holiness of heart and life," a typically Puritan slogan.[2] Baxter, for example, had a meeting in his house on Thursday evenings;[3] and Cragg notes that between 1660-1688 the Puritans held preparatory meetings for the Lord's Supper on Friday evenings, house prayer meetings at other times during the week, and young men's conferences up to six hours in length, involving a meal and light recreation and fellowship.[4]

But all authorities have overlooked the evidence in Mather which indicates that there were Puritan religious societies functioning long before Horneck's groups.[1]

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[1] Cf. A. W. Horneck, The Fire of the Altar (London, 1691); The Crucified Jesus (London, 1689); The Great Law of Consideration (London, 1814). Nagler (Pietism and Methodism [Nashville, 1918], p. 147) mistakenly connects Horneck with Pietism because of his German origin. Portus (op. cit., pp. 9, 13) describes Horneck's ministry in terms which make its High Church character quite clear. J. S. Simon (John Wesley and the Religious Societies [London, 1921], pp. 15, 17) notes the difference between the societies as Woodward describes them and the original meetings of Horneck, but does not recognize the full theological significance of this variation; and the same is true of Legg (op. cit., pp. 293, 295, 297).

[2] This fact has not been grasped by any of the authorities on the period, since Portus (op. cit., p. 80), and even Bahlman (op. cit., 69) state that the religious societies were uniformly Anglican in character. Cf. the rules of Horneck's society, listed by Legg (op. cit., p. 308), which are studiously churchly and non-Puritan in tone, with those of the Religious Society of St. Giles' Cripplegate, which have an extended summary on "evangelical holiness" (Legg, op. cit., p. 309).

[3] Gordon Wakefield (Puritan Devotion (London, 1957), p. 111.

[4] G. R. Cragg, Puritanism in the Period of the Great Persecution, 1660-1688 (Cambridge, England, 1957), p. 165.

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[1] The idea of deepening the spirituality of the church by building up bands of trained disciples through 'small group meetings,' which is experiencing a revival of interest today, has a long tradition in Western Christianity. Joachim Wach points out that there are roots of the *collegia* method in pre-Reformation sources such as Gerard Groote and the Brethren of the Common Life, and that Catholic usage among the Quietists may actually have influenced the development of Pietist conventicles (Joachim Wach, *Sociology of Religion* [Chicago, 1944], p. 174). Bahlman comments on a similarity to the Jesuit retreats (D. W. R. Bahlman, *The Moral Revolution of 1688* [New Haven, 1957], p. 105), and it is not inaccurate to say that both the retreats and the collegia were inner-worldly adaptations of the old monastic strategy. Within Protestantism, Luther made some tentative suggestions about *ecclesiolae in ecclesia* in his Preface to the *German Mass* (1526), but unfortunately for subsequent Lutheran development, he did not develop this project. But similar methods were adopted by the itinerant radical, Caspar Schwenkfeld (E. Beyreuther, *August Hermann Francke und die Anfange der Ökumenischen Bewegung* [Hamburg-Bergsted, 1957], p. 41), and by Reformed leaders like Zwingli, John a Lasco, and Martin Bucer in Strassburg (F. E. Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* [Leiden, 1965], p. 19; J. T. McNeill, *A History of the Cure of Souls* [New York, 1951], p. 180). Arndt made some use of such *collegia pietatis* (E. Beyreuther, *op. cit.*, p. 41); and Boehme was involved in house meetings of this type in Goerlitz in 1600 (A. W. Nagler, *Pietism and Methodism* [Nashville, 1918], p. 50). A scattering of German pre-Pietists, and an important group of Dutch precisianists, numbering among them Voetius, Cocceius, Lodensteyn, and Labadie, made use of conventicles. (Stoeffler, *op. cit.*, pp. 142, 160, 162). Spener, who adopted these in 1670, was influenced probably more by his awareness of Labadie's work than by German sources (Stoeffler, *op. cit.*, p. 230). These meetings, which involved prayer and the reading of sermons, devotional works and scripture, were moved out of homes and into the church in 1682 at the request of apprehensive church authorities, but this seemed to dampen the spirit; and because of this, and Spener's own doubts about the separatist tendencies in the *collegia* methodology when it spread beyond his direct supervision, he tended to play them down in later years, though the technique continued to characterize eighteenth-century Pietism (Nagler, *op. cit.*, p. 51). While the Pietist *collegia* were focussed on spiritual nurture through objective study of scripture and devotional works, the class meetings later developed by the Wesleys on the model of the English religious societies (with some influence from the Moravian band meetings) brought in a much greater degree of subjective exposure in their characteristic interchange of mutual confession and intercession, and also less clerical control due to the total participation of members (cf. G. V. Portus, *Caritas Anglicana* [London, 1912], pp. 197, 219; and F. F. Walrond, *Philipp Jacob Spener* [London, 1893], pp. 32-5). Nagler points out another significant difference: the Continental Pietists used the *collegia* strictly for the edification and renewal of church members, and consequently these developed an introvertive and esoteric character; whereas Wesley's intent was always evangelistic, and thrust beyond the borders of nominal Christianity, so that even the class meetings were exoteric. Thus German Pietism produced

Cotton Mather states that he was himself involved in a young men's religious society in Boston around 1678, when he was eighteen;[1] and he attempted to start another such society in 1683.[2] In 1685 he successfully initiated regular Day of Prayer for ministers and their wives;[3] and in 1686/7 he began family meetings in the various neighborhoods inhabited by church people.[4] In 1693 he records that a society of Negroes formed itself and approached him for advice and assistance.[5] The variety of types of meetings mentioned extend widely beyond the London societies on Horneck's model, and the first one Mather mentions originates in the same year as Horneck's first society; so it seems clear that these are expressions of Puritan faith and experience which are not dependent on the Anglican societies for their original impulse. This is confirmed by Mather in the Magnalia, where he indicates that various types of collegia have been flourishing since the very founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony:

> In the beginning of the country, the ministers had their frequent meetings, which were most usually after their publick and weekly or monthly lectures . . . and these meetings are maintained unto this day. The private Christians also had their private meetings, wherein they would seek the face, and sing the praise of God; and confer upon some questions of practical religion, for their mutual edification. And the country still is full of those little meetings; yet

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a limited 'awakening' which has a genetic relationship with the later revival under the Wesleys, (Nagler, op. cit., p. 135), but the continuity between the two movements is occasionally insufficiently stressed because of the narrower limits and lesser goals of the Pietists.

[1] C. Mather, Addresses to Old Men, and Young Men, and Little Children (Boston, 1690), p. 46.

[2] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 67-8 (July, 1683).

[3] Ibid., 106 (November, 1685); 125 (April, 1686).

[4] Ibid., 135 (January, 1686-7).

[5] Ibid., 176-7 (December, 1693).

> they have no mostly left off one circumstance, which those our primitive times was much maintained; namely, their concluding of their more sacred exercises with suppers; . . . Our private meetings of good people to pray and praise God, and hear sermons, either preached perhaps by the younger candidates for the ministry . . . or else repeated by exact writers of short hand after their pastors; and sometimes to spend whole days in fasting and prayer, especially when any of the neighborhood are in affliction, or when the communion of the Lord's table is approaching; those do still abound among us . . .[1]

It is improbable that these meetings among the first generation were entire innovations -- it is much more likely that they were modelled on English counterparts rooted in the private meetings in the early years of the Puritan movement.[2] Mather does mention the London societies in the Ratio Disciplinae (1726), but he simply implies that these are an Anglican counterpart of the native New England variety.[3]

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[1] C. Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana, II (Hartford, 1855), 145.

[2] Portus comments that certain Catholic movements have some resemblance to the English religious societies -- among them the charitable societies of St. Vincent de Paul, and the workers' communes founded by M. Henri Buch and M. de Renty in France, both of these in the 1640's -- but that the real prototypes for the English collegia were the medieval English craftgilds and the Puritan associations of laymen (Portus, op. cit., pp. 22 26). But no single progenitor for the English societies can be proved, or needs to be; the fact is, as Bahlman indicates, that there was a rash of voluntary societies of all sorts springing up in England during the 1690's, so that continental travelers were led to observe that the English were "of all nations the most forward to run into clubs, parties, and societies." Most of these societies were underground organizations for the promotion of heterodox opinions (Nils Thune, The Behmenists and the Philadelphians [Uppsala, 1948], p. 91), and many of them were primary engines for widening the streams of 'infidelity' that were running beneath the surface of English thought. "Therefore good men decided to fight fire with fire. They borrowed the idea of association from the papists, from the wicked, and from business enterprises . . ." (Bahlman, op. cit., p. 105). Woodward himself felt that Horneck modelled his societies on certain 'atheist clubs' which had begun to appear in the aftermath of the Restoration (Portus, op. cit., p. 10). Periods of repression and persecution tend to generate small group movements functioning as a clandestine religious underground, so it is not surprising that Puritanism after the Restoration and before the Glorious Revolution would generate such groups again, as it once had in the 'prophesying meetings' of the late sixteenth century (H. C. Porter, Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge [Cambridge, 1958], p. 197; I. Morgan, The Godly Preachers of the Elizabethan Church [London, 1965], pp. 68-100, 158, 170).

[3] C. Mather, Ratio Disciplinae (Boston, 1726), pp. 93, 96.

The various kinds of collegia mentioned by Mather include ministerial meetings -- which are unique in that they did not meet primarily for purposes of government or discipline, but for the spiritual edification of the participants through preaching, sharing of concerns and prayer -- and other meetings for families, women, and young men. The family meetings were ideally composed of about a dozen households in a neighborhood, meeting in homes once a month or fortnight, with ministers and ministerial candidates occasionally attending and preaching. The agenda of the meetings included prayers, the singing of psalms, the reading or hearing of sermons or devotional works, and even some sharing of spiritual experiences and personal needs. Sometimes whole days were devoted to prayer. The families involved in the cell group were to regard each other as prayer-concerns, and also to feel a responsibility to look after one another's material and physical welfare, as well as to seek methods of doing good in the neighborhood. The young men's meetings followed a similar pattern, meeting for two hours usually on a Sunday evening, with prayers and psalms, preaching and reading, and also an exchange of confidential mutual confession of spiritual needs. There was to be a quarterly collection, discipline of lapsed members, and a careful check on regular attendance; each member was to seek to recruit one new member on a regular basis; and once a month there was to be a whole evening of prayer for the rising generation. The pattern here sounds very close to that of Wesley's class meetings. Mather does not give any detailed description of the women's meetings, but probably these followed a similar pattern.[1] Mather in several places takes note of variants on this pattern such as societies for students, meeting at college, along the lines of the Wesleys' Holy Club; and "sodalities" formed by ministerial students.[1]

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[1] C. Mather, Private Meetings Regulated and Animated (Boston, 1706); Religious Societies (Boston, 1724).

It thus appears that Mather's use of religious societies was in no sense an innovation, or even the adoption of a new method pioneered elsewhere. As a matter of fact, the Puritan collegia seem to antedate, and in their development and variety to dwarf by comparison, their Anglican and Pietist counterparts. Although the concept of the collegia pietatis has been in former years mainly attached to German Pietism, probably due to the controversy over these engendered by Lutheran orthodox critics of Spener and Francke, the strongest rootage of the conventicle approach seems to be in the Reformed tradition, in its English Puritan and Dutch Precisianist extensions.

But although Mather did not in any sense adopt a new method in throwing the societies into the breach left by loss of theocratic control, he was influenced by another kind of collegium pioneered in England in the 1690's, the 'reforming society.' These were a different species from the Anglican religious societies, as we have noted: they were composed of Nonconformists as well as Anglican churchmen, and they aimed mainly at the suppression of moral disorders which had begun to spread during the reign of James II and had reached a pitch of public decadence during the 90's, with outbursts of drunkenness, prostitution, sodomy, and an unusually licentious stage. Suspecting in this a Roman Catholic plot to undermine English Protestantism, and widely moved by the familiar Puritan idea that such national sins would soon call down a national judgment from God, English Protestants banded together in societies for the suppression of disorders, supported in this by King William and particularly by his pious wife, and also by their successor, Queen Anne. These societies were initiated immediately following the revolution,[1] and their purpose was principally to implement on a popular level the laws against disorders which were rapidly being enacted or revived by the new administration. Bahlman comments, "If acts of Parliament and orders of justices of the peace could create a moral paradise, England would have been one by 1700;"[2] and the reforming societies simply endeavored to get these laws enforced -- principally by the use of voluntary or paid informers who would bear witness against violators before the magistrate.

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[1] C. Mather, Golgotha (Boston, 1713), p. 43; Hor-Hagidgad (Boston, 1727), p. 22; Manuductio ad Ministerium (Boston, 1726), p. 72.

The first reforming society was begun in the East End of London in 1690 by a small group of men in the Established Church, meeting monthly, with the main goal of suppressing houses of prostitution. A second society was started in the Strand in 1691 by Edward Stephens, which attempted to influence lax justices and magistrates with signed warrants, and ran into a certain amount of predictable controversy. By 1699 there were eight such groups operating in London, and counterparts in six English towns, but there was little apparent success, and the original impulse was beginning to die. In this year, however, a letter of Archbishop Tenison endorsing the societies set off a second wave of enthusiasm for them, and by 1703 there were twenty societies, more or less organically related. The goals of some of these societies -- stopping Sunday travel and the regulation of the theatre, for example -- sound suspiciously Puritanical. Bahlman observes that the unpleasant figure of the informer soon became synonymous which the societies in the public imagination, that by

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[1] J. Wickhamm Legg, English Church Life from the Restoration to the Tractarian Movement (London, 1914), p. 301.

[2] D. W. R. Bahlman, The Moral Revolution of 1688 (New Haven, 1957), p. 22.

1704 even advocates were admitting the insufficiency of this approach, and that in 1711 Swift complained of the factionalism and general ineffectiveness of the societies. These societies did tend to become centers of controversy rather than peaceful reform; they were strongly (and probably accurately) suspected of Puritan and seditious tendencies because of the membership of dissenters, and they wakened a resentment among the common people at the infringement of their privacy which ultimately may have contributed to the downfall of the Whigs. In the early 1700's the established church began to place more emphasis on the curative powers of moral and religious education through the Charity Schools being forwarded by the S.P.C.K., and the reforming societies died a lingering death which finally culminated in the late 1730's. John Wesley, who re-established them later, commented that the original impetus in these and other attempted projects of reformation was lost because of the decay in evangelical religion in the successors of the founders. It is fairly evident, however, that nothing as intrinsically legal and theocratic as the reforming societies could have brought any vital renewal to English society. They were a final and unsuccessful echo of Geneva in English Protestant life.[1]

The idea of using collegia as instruments of moral reformation, however, did have some appeal in the early 1700's to leaders who had already found cell groups useful in supporting piety; and both Francke in Halle and Mather in Boston sought to blend an element of moral reformation into their practice. Even before the appearance of the reforming societies, Spener, in 1678, had been aware of the religious societies in England, and had prepared a Latin translation of the Pia Desideria to reach such groups.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 1-22, 31-7, 60-66, 77-80, 101.

But around the turn of the century, Francke learned of the new reforming societies through the diplomat H. W. Ludolf, wrote an account of his own work for the S.P.C.K., and became a corresponding member of that organization.[1] In 1709 Francke told the London groups that societies of reformation were in existence on the Continent in Nuremberg, Augsburg, Ratisbon, Schaffhausen,[2] and Brussels.[3]

Meanwhile, in Boston, by 1702 Mather had heard of the London societies and had established two societies in his own area, one in imitation of the British Society for the Propagation of the Christian Religion (formed in London in 1699), and the other a Society for the Suppression of Disorders, comprised of fourteen civic leaders and lesser magistrates.[4] In 1703 he published his own popularization of the work of the English Reformation societies, Methods and Motives, for a Society to Suppress Disorders.[5] By June, 1705, the reforming society, composed of members from the three Congregational churches in town, had grown to the point where Mather had to split it into three societies, with one each for the North and South ends of town.[6] In 1706, some forty people involved in the society for propagating Christian knowledge and: "the several Societies for the Suppressions of Disorders" met at Mather's house for a day of fasting and prayer for revival and reformation at home and abroad.[1] In 1710 Mather noted that a new society had been formed, and he determined to devote one day in each weekly cycle of "Good Devices" to meditation on how to serve and animate these.[2] Throughout most of the rest of his life Mather regularly encouraged the societies to bring legal sanctions to bear on problems ranging from profane language among school children[3] to houses of prostitution.[4] He also did everything in his power to convince the existing religious societies to add a dimension of reformation of manners to their character.[5]

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[1] Martin Schmidt, "Der Ökumenische Zinn des deutschen Pietismus und seine Auswirkungen in der Bibelverbreitung," in Oskar Söhngen, ed., Die Bleibende Bedeutung des Pietismus (Wittenburg, 1960), p. 63. Francke noted that in 1700 Woodward's account of the societies had been translated into German (G. V. Portus, Caritas Anglicana [London, 1912], p. 111).

[2] J. S. Simon, John Wesley and the Religious Societies (London, 1921), p. 26.

[3] Portus, op. cit., p. 112.

[4] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 412 (March, 1701/2); contra Portus, op. cit., 113, who states that the Boston societies began in 1704.

[5] Ibid., 500 (January, 1703/4).

[6] Ibid., 516-17 (June, 1704).

Mather's first publications urging the formation of reforming societies are fairly candid about what these intend. Methods and Motives (1703), which notes the spread of this method in Ireland, Scotland, Holland, and Switzerland as well as England and Germany, states that the societies should number between seven and seventeen members (though they can operate with only three or four); that they should include a minister and a Justice of the Peace; and that they should discuss during each meeting the existing disorders and means of restraining these legally. But he adds that the society and its membership should be kept secret, so it is evident that he already recognized the existence of a certain risk of controversy.[1] A Faithful Monitor (1714) discusses the London societies, and insists that reformation must be prosecuted both by magistrates and informers such as the Tything men, but is at least moderate in urging that some secret abuses can be settled out of court if the informer feels this is more discreet.[2] Gradually, however, Mather's public utterances on the societies take on a cautious and defensive attitude. Private Meetings Animated and Regulated (1706) does not list reforming societies in its typology of collegia, notes that these are only attacked where 'The Saviour of Experimental Piety has left People,' compiles a lengthy scriptural warrant for them, and protests that the kinds of meetings listed are not seditious or otherwise objectionable.[3] Pastoral Desires (1712) seems to stress mainly the meetings for spiritual edification, but notes carefully that these should

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[1] Ibid., 531 (February, 1705/6).

[2] Ibid., II (New York, 1957), 27 (February, 1709/10).

[3] Ibid., 206 (May, 1713).

[4] Ibid., 160 (February, 1711/12); 229 (August, 1713); 235 (September, 1713); 283 (February, 1713/14).

[5] Ibid., 156 (February, 1711/12); C. Mather, Pastoral Desires (Boston, 1712), p. 87.

> . . . admit no Discourse . . . that shall have any Taint of Calumny or Vanity, or intermeddle with what belongs not unto them . . . But then, I would earnestly make this Motion to them; that the Religious Societies, would now and then spend some Time in considering that Question, What Good may we do in our Neighborhood? and put on the Character and Intentions of Reforming Societies.[4]

A late revision of the section on the societies in Bonifacius is careful to state that these should

> . . . be exceedingly careful that their Discourse while they are together . . . have nothing in it that shall have any taint of Backbiting or Vanity, or the least relation to the Affairs of the Government, or things which do not concern them, or serve the Interests of God in them. But let their Discourse be wholly on matters

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[1] C. Mather, Methods and Motives for Societies to Supress Disorders (Boston, 1703), p. 1.

[2] C. Mather, A Faithful Monitor (Boston, 1704), pp. 49-52.

[3] C. Mather, Private Meetings Animated and Regulated (Boston, 1706), p. 21.

[4] C. Mather, Pastoral Desires (Boston, 1712), p. 87.

> of Religion, and those also not the Disputable, and Controversial matters, but the points of practical Piety.[1]

The *Ratio Disciplinae* of 1726 goes into detail about the religious societies but does not even mention societies of reformation.[2] In the meantime, Mather's *Diary* indicates that things were not going smoothly for the reforming impulse among the societies after their first efflorescence, for after 1710 some of these were disbanding and others reverting to pure religious edification.[3] The "General *Society, for the Suppression of Disorders*" was "dissolved by the Calamities of Winter" in 1714 and had to be restimulated.[4] By 1724 all the societies devoted specifically to reforming manners had disintegrated, victims doubtless of the apathy of their members, the overall fruitlessness of their efforts, and the criticism which can be heard faintly behind Mather's guarded public references to them. But privately Mather is still staunchly behind the idea: "I purpose, if I can, to draw a number of our Ministers, into a Combination, to erect and revive a *Society for the Suppression of Disorders*; which may go on upon such a Plan, as in this Town such a Society formerly went upon; and a World of Good was accomplished."[5]

It is true that the strictly religious societies experienced difficulties along with their cousins devoted merely to reformation.[6] Part of the problem with both types of society may have been their loose relationship to ministerial authority and the consequent need of experienced guidance. Mather is of two minds about this. On the one hand, he speaks with admiration of the powerful impression made on Giles Firmin by the prayers of "plain mechanicks,"[1] and of the occasional preaching of laymen.[2] On the other hand, his regard for church order (or his awareness of others' regard for it) caused him to go on record against purely lay leadership.[3] Yet it seems clear that very often the religious and reforming societies had to proceed without ministerial leadership, for Mather is constantly complaining that he is out of touch with the multiplicity of societies operating in Boston.[4]

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[1] C. Mather, *Religious Societies* (Boston, 1724), p. 7.

[2] C. Mather, *Ratio Disciplinae* (Boston, 1726), pp. 93-104, 102-3.

[3] C. Mather, *Diary*, II (New York, 1957), 42 (February, 1710/11); 156 (February, 1711/12).

[4] *Ibid.*, 275 (January, 1713/14).

[5] *Ibid.*, 767 (October, 1724).

[6] *Ibid.*, 107 (September, 1711).

Whatever problems the religious and reforming societies encountered, Mather throughout his life regarded them as both a prime index of spiritual vitality in a community, and a potent instrument for producing it.

> Experience tells us, That where they have been kept alive, and under a Prudent Conduct, the Christians that have composed them, have like so many _Living Coals_ kept one another alive, and kept up the Life of Christianity in the Vicinity. But the Dying of these has been accompanied with a Visible Death upon the _Power of Godliness_; the less _Love_ to them, the less _Use_ of them, there has been in any Place, the less has all _Godliness_ flourished there.[5]

He considered even the pure reforming societies part of the vanguard of the expected millenial awakening:

> There is this to be observed; A _Spirit of Association_ for Noble & Pious Purposes, has of late begun Strangely to Visit the World; it begins to do Wondrously. Some _Societies_ perhaps are yet only laying _Foundations_, for purposes of a more Exact Regulation hereafter to be built upon. But as far off as in _Switzerland_ they

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[1] C. Mather, _Magnalia Christi Americana_, I (Hartford, 1855), 242.

[2] C. Mather, _Ratio Disciplinae_ (Boston, 1726), pp. 192-3.

[3] _Ibid_.

[4] C. Mather, _Diary_, II (New York, 1957), 44 (February, 1710/11); 153 (January, 1711/12); 439 (March, 1716/17).

[5] C. Mather, _Pastoral Desires_ (Boston, 1712), p. 87.

> Prognosticate upon them; They anunciate a more Illustrious State of the Church of God, that is Expected, in the Conversion of Jews & Gentiles.[1]

The reforming societies may seem rather legalistic to be considered a harbinger of revival, but, as Samuel Mather points out, Mather's use of them was not confined to legal repression of non-Puritan behavior, but extended to the consideration of cases of oppression or fraudulence in the business life of the community and care for the needy and afflicted.[2] The societies were employed as socioreligious associations for the spiritual and corporal care of whole neighborhoods. Thus they not only predicted some of the features of the nineteenth-century voluntary societies which were their lineal descendants, but in some measure surpassed these as expressions of local spiritual and social concern.[3]

C. Mather's Approach to Social Issues

Mather's equal concern for the spiritual wellbeing of his community, and for its material, social, and political needs, makes him uniquely fascinating to modern Christians weary of the current unnatural separation between these realms, or the reduction of one into the other. We have already indicated that Mather's social activism was in no way peculiar to him. In breaking down the monastery walls, and endeavoring to make the whole parish into an ideal community of love and mutual concern, modeled on the church in Acts or the Old Testament tribal unit, the Puritans had added an even stronger social dynamic to the already developed unity of

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[1] C. Mather, Thoughts for the Day of Rain (Boston, 1712), p. 62.

[2] Samuel Mather, Life of Cotton Mather (Boston, 1729), pp. 55-6.

[3] C. Mather, Diary, II (New York, 1957), 102 (September, 1711).

Medieval society, which had structured almsgiving to the poor, and charity to other forms of need, into its piety of works. Puritan casuistry conceived of the individual's responsibility to society as an economy of radiating circles of concern, spreading out from his own and his family's needs to embrace his neighbors, his countrymen and all mankind, with a slightly greater priority given to the needs of men's souls than to those of their bodies, and to believers over non-believers. Though the hierarchical concept of class-structure was still taken for granted, and indeed carefully reinforced by religious sanctions, Puritanism had a certain implicit revolutionary dynamic due to its biblical stress on the excellence of the lowly. This was balanced, however, by another strong biblical vector enforcing respect for constituted authority. The Protestant concept of vocation introduced a new egalitarian note against the older Medieval attitude which ranked clerks above mechanics, insisting that careful fulfilment of a 'low' vocation is as valid and praiseworthy as the same achievement in a calling of 'higher status'. While it was assumed (again, on biblical grounds from the prevalent teaching in the Old Testament) that normally the godly will prosper, there was no blanket endorsement of the wealthy as a class or capitalism as a system, but rather the emphasis was on restraint of usury and sinfully motivated economic endeavor. For this reason, the profit-motive was universally condemned, competition was discouraged, a via media with respect to prosperity was endorsed as probably most healthy, and most forms of economic behavior were intrinsically suspect as either visionary or exploitative. The result was a thoroughly social-minded ethical consciousness which was the polar opposite of the rugged individualism attributed to nineteenth-century evangelicalism. The governmental theory which resulted involved an approach to the relief of social need which approximated that of the modern welfare state, with a concern even for 'preventive charity,' and for the maintenance of public institutions such as colleges, hospitals, libraries, and free schools. This, of course, was only in the theoretical basis of the ministers' consciousness: how their parishioners followed through on this ideal was, as always, another matter.[1] But in the favorable circumstances of New England Puritanism, the community which developed from the first generation of founders actually was bound together with strong ties of mutual concern -- Battis characterizes Gov. Winthrop's administration as a typical welfare state which was less than acceptable to the prosperous merchant class already appearing in Boston[2] -- and, as Murdock says, there was a long tradition in New England of 'public spirit' and social consciousness, culminating very signally in Increase and Cotton Mather.[3]

We have already observed that, contrary to popular stereotypes, Continental Pietism in its strongest period was just as conscious and active in the remedy of social need. Erich Beyreuther attributes this in part to a general broadening in social outlook at the close of the seventeenth century, common to both religious and pre-Enlightenment circles in Europe, as men reacted to a century of hatred and strife and sought constructive cultural alternatives, producing a new, active leadership which Beyreuther calls *homo societatis*.[1] But the same activism and social concern were present virtually at the beginning of Pietism in Germany. Arndt's *True Christianity*, for instance, has a strong ethical impulse, and stresses equally the love of God and concern for neighbors, although it has usually been pilloried as an expression of world-forsaking mysticism.[2] J. V. Andreae, one of Arndt's friends, wrote a utopia, the *Christianopolis*, which projects the distinctive Pietist approach to live orthodoxy, and also an advanced set of suggestions for Christian social reform. Influenced perhaps by Calvin's work in Geneva, Andreae has much to say about associations for civic welfare, education and the support of impoverished students, and government-directed relief for the poor and sick.[3] Essentially the same concern for social need is carried over in Spener's *Pia Desideria*, and in his whole ministry;[4] although Spener (unlike the Puritans) agreed with Lutheran orthodoxy in advising against direct political action on the part of churchmen,[5] and did not project any practical solutions to social problems.[1] It is with Francke, however, that the full impact of Pietism for social transformation is first historically demonstrated. Beginning in the parish at Glaucha by feeding and simultaneously catechizing the orphanned and impoverished survivors of the Thirty Years' War, in several decades he transformed the town into a social and cultural center in which the large cluster of institutions he began, including an orphanage, hospital, library, and missionary center, testify to the social impact of his approach to Christian experience.[2] Although most historians have represented Halle Pietism as essentially conservative, and apolitical in Spener's fashion,[3] Beyreuther maintains that a systematic remedy for poverty, and even a levelling of social classes, were implicit in Francke's thought, and that not only the nobility but the state itself was to be mobilized toward these goals.[4] All these social ideals were grounded, however, in Francke's expectation of spiritual awakening: "*Religiöse und soziale Erwekkung liegen ineinander*."[5]

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[1] C. H. and K. George, The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation (Princeton, 1961), pp. 83-5, 89-90, 104, 131-9, 156-8, 162-9.

[2] E. Battis, Saints and Sectaries (Williamsburg, 1962), pp. 103, 117.

[3] K. B. Murdock, Literature and Theology in Colonial New England (Cambridge, Mass., 1949), p. 131.

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[1] "*Ernst der Fromme gehört . . . zu dem neuen Menschentyp, zu dem* homo societatis. *Dieser homo societatis, geboren im ström der Friedenssehnsucht der Zeit, die sich aus der Flut von Hass und Wirrnis zu befereien sucht . . . Der Glaube an den Sittigungsprozess, an eine sittliche Entwicklung der Menschheit, erzeugt ein neues Aktivitätsideal . . . Ein neues Kulturideal sucht die Echtheit der Glaubigkeit in der Kraft christlicher Sittlichkeit. Der Gradmesser fur die in innere Wahrheit eines Glaubens liegt in seiner Liebesgesinnung, in seiner gemeinschaftsbildenden Kraft*" (E. Beyreuther, *August Hermann Francke und die Anfange der Ökumenischen Bewegung* [Hamburg-Bergstedt, 1957], pp. 30-31).

[2] *Ibid*., pp. 26, 36-7: "*Johann Arndt steht in der Grundstimmung des 17. Jahrhunderts, die ethizistisch-unionistisch-ökumenisch ist*." Cf. E. Beyreuther, *August Hermann Francke, 1663-1727, Zeuge des lebendigen Gottes* (*2te Aufl*., Marburg, 1961), p. 147.

[3] J. V. Andreae, *Christianopolis*, tr. and ed. by F. E. Held (New York, 1916), pp. 242-3, 272 ff.

[4] E. Beyreuther, *August Hermann Francke und die Anfange der Ökumenischen Bewegung* (Hamburg-Bergstedt, 1957), pp. 39-40; Klaus Deppermann, *Der Hallesche Pietismus und der preussische Staat unter Friedrich III* (Göttingen, 1961), pp. 51-55.

[5] J. T. McNeill, *Modern Christian Movements* (Philadelphia, 1954), p. 72.

> *Daher fühlt sich Francke tenötigt, einen Generalplan zur Bekämpfung aller Noth auf Erden zu entwickeln. Er hat erlebt, wie das alte Evangelium von Sünde und Gnade ungezählte Menschen neu erfasst. Als*

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[1] A. W. Nagler, *Pietism and Methodism* (Nashville, 1918), p. 54.

[2] E. Beyreuther, *August Hermann Francke, 1663-1727, Zeuge des lebendigen Gottes* (*2te Aufl.*, Marburg, 1961), pp. 148-62.

[3] E. g. Deppermann, *op. cit.*, pp. 173-4, McNeill, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

[4] "*Das Reich Gottes ist für Francke eine Realität auf Erden. Der Staat ist ihm nicht mehr, wie bei Luther, nur eine Institution zur gewaltsamen Aufrechterhaltung einer Ordnung. Er hat einen höheren Zweck. 'Könige und Fürsten,' sagt Francke, 'müssen erweckt werden, dass das Reich des Satans in der Welt zerstöret und Gottes Reich aufgerichtet werde'*" (E. Beyreuther, *August Hermann Francke, 1663-1727, Zeuge des lebendigen Gottes* (*2te Aufl.*, Marburg, 1961), p. 181).

[5] E. Beyreuther, *August Hermann Francke und die Anfange der Ökumenischen Bewegung* (Hamburg - Bergstedt, 1957), p. 50.

> *gleichgultigen und opferscheuen Christen sind energiegeladene und bekenntnisfreudige geworden, die sich opferwillig in die Gesinnungs--- und Arbeitsgemeinschaft um Francke einordnen. Das ist ja das neue Anliegen des Pietismus, das die Kirche und die Schule nicht Kenntnisse vermitteln, sondern Menschen verwandeln sollen. Wir mehr Menschen wirklich "wiedergeboren" werden, um so näher liegt die Möglichkeit, unter den politischen und sozialen Misständen der Welt aufzuräumen. Bekehrung und Wiedergeburt sollen auch in den Dienst der sozialen Verbesserung der Welt und der Menschen treten.*[1]

Since there is so great an affinity between Mather's own tradition and Francke's, it is not surprising that Mather should respond eagerly to the news of the latter's charitable work at Glaucha, specifically to the accounts of his labors with orphans. In April of 1711 he notes in his diary: "Which of the Tribes of *Israel*, have I left yett unserved? The *Orphans*. They are numerous and afflicted . . . I have an opportunity to publish a Book for *Orphans*."[2] In May of this year he sent his *Orphanotrophium* and a gift of four pounds in gold to the orphanage at Halle,[3] and some months later he wrote again to Halle with another gift, urging the translation of Puritan works on piety into German.[4] He continued to support the work in Halle during the rest of his life, and also on several occasions took orphans into his own home for a season.[5] Some years earlier, Mather had been active, through the religious societies, in the founding of a Charity School for poor children and orphans, and he gave a good deal of subsequent attention to the preservation and improvement of this work.[6] A second school, for the education of negroes, was begun in 1716 and maintained for years solely at Mather's expense.[1]

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[1] E. Beyreuther, *August Hermann Francke, 1663-1727, Zeuge des lebendigen Gottes* (*2te Aufl.*, Marburg, 1961), p. 181.

[2] C. Mather, *Diary*, II (New York, 1957), 57 (April, 1711).

[3] *Ibid.*, 73-4 (May, 1711); 150 (January, 1711/12).

[4] Cf. *Ibid.*, 563 (October, 1718).

[5] *Ibid.*, 344 (April, 1716); 349 (May, 1716); 495 (December, 1717); 518 (March, 1718); 570 (November, 1718); 552 (September, 1718).

[6] *Ibid.*, 24, 27 (February, 1709/10); 214 (June, 1713); 341 (March, 1716); 344 (April, 1716); 370 (September, 1716).

Most of Mather's social thought and charitable action evolved out of his own tradition, and not through Pietist influence. Like Glaucha, Boston during Mather's lifetime was an appropriate laboratory for the development of Christian social action. It was the wealthiest city among the colonies, and following Winthrop's original intent, it took better care of the poor than most others, and so attracted more vagrants. There were many orphans and widows left from the intermittent wars -- Mather said in 1718 that a fifth of his congregation consisted of widows[2] -- and fires and plagues combined to increase this problem during the early part of the eighteenth century. Carl Bridenbaugh notes that the churches, and particularly Mather, through his 'animation' of the religious societies, took an eminent part in meeting these problems: "No family of colonial times ever demanded, or deserved, more respect than the Mathers; in religious, political and public concerns, they exerted an enormous influence . . . [Cotton Mather] was without question the most public spirited colonial before Benjamin Franklin, who drew much of his inspiration from the Boston minister."[3]

There are two main presuppositions which motivate Mather's social concern, both directly rooted in his tradition. The first is drawn more or less from the light of reason, although Mather can find a theocratic text for it in Esther 4:14: it is "the duty of a public spirit, that every Christian should venture all for God's People," for the commonwealth of which he is a member.[1] The second is derived from the teaching of Christ in the parable of the Good Samaritan, that every Christian has an obligation to his neighbors, including a responsibility to give material aid to these when needed:[2] "It would be the unspeakable Joy of a Good man, to See all his Neighbours about Him, Happy. If he can't see all that he should see of that, he will do all he can however to make them, Easy. A minister should Study to be a Barnabas; and to Cheer as well as to Save, the Souls of them that Hear him."[3] The mixture of physical sympathy and spiritual concern here is echoed in other sermons: "Christians, Let your Hearts Bleed with Compassion, when you see the Spiritual . . . and the Temporal Miseries of other men."[4] "And agreeably, will we Satisfy not ourselves with saying, Be you warmed and filled; but help you to such things as are Needful to the Body. There are some things, relating to the Soul which it is proper at the same time to mind you of."[5]

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[1] Ibid., 379 (October, 1716); 500 (January, 1717/18); 663 (December, 1721).

[2] C. Mather, Marah Spoken to (Boston, 1718), p. 1.

[3] C. Bridenbaugh, Cities in the Wilderness (New York, 1938), pp. 233-34, 252.

Perry Miller has criticized Mather's handling of the relationships between poverty and wealth, asserting that he was a semi-conscious instrument of the preservation of the establishment, and that his addresses to the poor "are among the most brutal" of all the religious apologists for privilege.[6] This appears to be an especially perverse misevaluation of Mather when it is compared with the whole scope of his statements on the issues. Mather is typical of classical Puritanism in his mistrust of wealth: "*Great Estates*, like the *great Rivers*, often are swelled by Muddy Streams running into them. Some of the *Wealth* is *ill gotten Wealth*. *Dishonest Gain* has increned it. *Unfair* and *unjust* Things have been done in the amassing of it."[1] This is not a simple moralistic attack on overt robbery. Mather considers the covetousness of the rich evil not only because it breaks commandments, but because it destroys the fabric of society:

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[1] C. Mather, The Present State of New England (Boston, 1690), pp. 16 ff.

[2] C. Mather, Pastoral Desires (Boston, 1712), p. 72.

[3] C. Mather, Mare Pacificum (Boston, 1705), p. 2.

[4] C. Mather, Christianity to the Life (Boston, 1702), pp. 50-51.

[5] C. Mather, Seasonable Advice to the Poor (Boston, 1726), p. 1.

[6] P. Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), pp. 399-402.

> Men grow more *Dangerous Criminals*, and are so sharp with the *Cursed Hunger of Riches*, that they do things wherein *Humane Society* shall be considerably Damnified. Our Gracious GOD has a Wondrous Tenderness for *Humane Society*; And when men grow so Outreageous in the Ways of *Dishonesty*, that *Humane Society* suffers insupportable Damages from them; Now there goes up that Cry to Heaven, '*Tis Time, Lord, for thee to work*! GOD comes down, GOD steps in, GOD in Compassion to *Humane Society*, fulfills that word upon the man who *trusted in the abundance of his Riches*.[2]

There is abundant evidence that Mather was extremely disturbed by the prevalence of dishonest business practices in Boston, and was not afraid to rebuke these before congregations which numbered wealthy tradesmen among the supporters of the church. The techniques of this malpractice are described principally in two sermons devoted to business ethics, *Lex Mercatoria* (1705) and *Theopolis Americana* (1710). In the first of these, while protesting that Boston's business habits are better than average, Mather attacks the prevalence of open theft, misrepresentation of defective merchandise, false measures, financial exploitation of the poor and ignorant, inordinate and uncompensated borrowing, the dishonesty of lawyers, cheats on the public treasury, and trades that are socially destructive (such as prostitution, gaming, fortune-telling, and tavern-keeping improperly managed). As partial answers to these problems, Mather recommends the practice of the Golden Rule, and a real consideration of the benefit of the commonwealth on the part of merchants. Both of these sermons urge as the ultimate answer, however, the repentance and regeneration of more of the merchant population.[1] But it is not just dishonest practice among employers which Mather is attacking, but all oppression of the working class, or even a coldly businesslike attitude which leaves them to their fate. In *The Fisherman's Calling*, Mather includes a Preface directed to the employers of fishermen, encouraging them to regard their employees as a kind of family for which they are responsible:

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[1] C. Mather, *Agricola* (Boston, 1727), p. 63.

[2] C. Mather, *Instructions to the Living* (Boston, 1717), p. 58.

> I Entreat of *You*, That you would not only be always very *Just*; but also be very *Kind* unto them. And that you would not cause The Fish's Life, (a very Ancient Proverb, for a Life Obnoxious to continual Difficulties, and Depredations,) to be the *Fisherman's* . . . That you do not use any Unfair *Oppression* or *Extortion* upon them; That you do not improve the Opportunities which their *Necessities* and *Entanglements* may give you, to Exact Severely upon them; That in your Dealings with them, you manifest your selves to be *Full of Goodness*; Very Tenderhearted and Compassionate; Very Averse to the doing of any thing which will not square well with the *Conscience* of that *Golden Rule*, *To do as you would be done unto* . . . That you would be very *Fathers* to them, and fore cast for them, to make a better provision for them, and for their families, than they would themselves make, if they were left unto themselves, and their own Unhappy Conduct. Estates Raised by a cruel scruing upon Poor Fisher-men, may feel, and have often felt, an Observable Blast from God upon them.[2]

It is true that at other points in this tract, as in certain other writings, Mather is endeavoring to allay social unrest by persuading the poor to accept their position as providentially ordained.

> There is one thing more, against which I will warn my *Fisher-man*, and then I will add no more: That is, A Sinful *Discontent*, with his own *Low*, & *Small*, & *Hard* Circumstances in the World . . . Tis true, you may *fare hardly*, and you can't enjoy many possessions & enjoyments, wherein you may see some other People flourishing. But

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[1] *Lex Mercatoria* (Boston, 1705), *passim*; *Theopolis Americana* (Boston, 1710), *passim*.

[2] C. Mather, *The Fisherman's Calling* (Boston, 1712), pp. ii-iii.

> it is a Wise GOD, who has made this Condition, The thing appointed for you; And a Contentment with your Condition, is no little part of that Obedience, wherewith you are to Glorify Him. . . . It will be but a little while that you shall Continue in any of your Uneasy Circumstances. Know CHRIST, and Serve Him, and Live Religiously & Contentedly, and you will quickly be taken into that Heavenly World, where you shall be with Peter and James and John, and see things beyond what they saw, when they were with our Saviour . . . Pious, and Prayerful, and Patient Fisher-men, will be some of them who shall Shine, in the Kingdom of our Saviour.[1]

Another tract devoted exclusively to this line of thought makes a cheerful submission to poverty one of the marks of regeneration, and goes on to say,

> Tis the GOD of Heaven who has Ordered your being found among the Poor of the Earth. O potsherd of the Earth, Since 'tis the work of His hands, which has made you to be what you are, and will have you to be a Vessel not guilded with some of the shining Dust that He has allowed unto others, Glorify Him with a Submission to His Holy Sovereignty . . . All your present Poverty is but the Inconvenience of an Inn, where you are but as a wayfaring Man, which turns aside but for a Night . . . And if you carry it well under your Poverty, it will be but a Short Moment before you come to that Glad Moment, when you shall at once find yourself invested with what will render you Richer, than if you should light on a Rock of Diamonds, or a Mountain of Gold . . . You must be Poor in Spirit if you would have a part in the Kingdom of Heaven. The Poor in Spirit, are they that bear to be Poor, and have a Spirit reconciled unto Poverty, if it please the Sovereign Disposer of all things, to bring them unto it. What? Can't you bear to be Beholden unto Friends, when GOD will have you to be so? This Heighth of Spirit looks ill, . . . It may seem an Hard Saying, but it must be said; if you can't bring your Spirit unto this, To be willing to go to Heaven by the way of an Alms house, when God shall assign you such a Lodging, you may justly question, whether you shall ever come thither.[2]

It should be noted here that Mather does not assume in nineteenth-century fashion that poverty is the inevitable punishment for slothfulness or any other kind of sin. On the contrary, like Job's misfortunes, it may be just part of the cards in the hand one has been dealt by Providence, simply one kind of obstacle course whose completion can lead to our sanctification. Mather occasionally remarks that God may bless piety in this life with an increase in riches or status,[1] and even uses this as a bait to encourage piety.[2] His answer to the Weber-Tawney thesis is that God does bless Protestant nations with material goods:

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[1] Ibid., pp. 47-9.

[2] C. Mather, Seasonable Advice to the Poor (Boston, 1726), pp. 7-9.

> The *Protestant Religion* hath not been set up scarce in *any Nation*, but it has made them, even in Temporals, within a very little while, twice as *Rich* and as *Great* as they were before; And one, somewhat curious in his *Calculations*, has demonstrated, That the Abolishing of *Poery* in the *English Nation*, is worth at least Eight Millions of Pounds Sterling, yearly profit unto it.[3]

On the other hand, he holds that the Old Testament promises of prosperity accompanying piety were never absolutely universal, and are less certain than ever in the New Testament era. In discussing the proposals of the Reforming Synod, Mather even goes so far as to question the prevailing theory of Providence and the national covenant, although he asserts elsewhere that there is still value in testing ourselves when our circumstances decay too far:

> Its true, In the Dayes of the *Old Testament*, there was more of a *Temporal Advantage* usually Rewarding the Service of God. A more Carnal & Childish Temper, was then prevailing. The Lord hired His People, to learn His Lessons, with the fine Apples of *Temporal Advantage* . . . But now the Dealings of God with His People are more Mysterious.[4]
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> Indeed . . . our SAVIOUR has no where Promised a *Temporal Prosperity*, unto a Life of *Piety*; but bid us look for the Discipline of the *Cross*.[5]

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[1] C. Mather, *The Best Ornaments of Youth* (Boston, 1707), p. 6; *Agricola* (Boston, 1727), p. 198.

[2] C. Mather, *The Tribe of Asher* (Boston, 1717), p. 24; *The Sailours Companion* (Boston, 1709), Preface; *Euthanasia* (Boston, 1723), pp. 25-7; *Durable Riches*, (Boston, 1695).

[3] C. Mather, *A Pillar of Gratitude* (Boston, 1700), p. 19.

[4] C. Mather, *The Armour of Christianity* (Boston, 1704), p. 158.

[5] C. Mather, *Parentator* (Boston, 1724), p. 83.

Actually, for Mather, both prosperity and poverty are only diverse kinds of trials sent to test the sincerity of piety,[1] and the only assured promise we have as a reward for piety is that God will give us the desires of our heart if we delight ourselves in Him, even if He must change those desires in the process.[2] Mather was evidently quite accustomed to finding a disproportion between wealth and piety within his own congregation: "You are my Witnesses, that when a conspicuous Piety has distinguished [men], I have not fail'd of taking a due Public Notice of them. Tho' they may have been Persons of a Low Degree in Poverty, yet if they have had an High Degree of Piety, to render them observable Blessings to the Neighborhood, I have endeavored, that GOD may be Glorified in them."[3]

Mather evidently felt that there was a public as well as a private dimension in our responsibility for the relief of the poor, for he was one of the most active agents in forwarding civic care in this direction, specifically in the improvement of the Boston Alms House.[4] It is true, however, that much of his treatment of the subject falls back on private means as institutionalized in Medieval almsgiving: "Is not Alms-giving a considerable Article of Righteousness? 'Tis all over the Bible call'd so, and for weighty and obvious Reasons. 'Tis opposite here, to the spirit and conduct of the Men of this World; who what they don't spend on their own bellies, are studious to leave all the rest unto their Children."[5] Both Increase Mather and his son were themselves extraordinarily generous in almsgiving, even in times of personal poverty.[1] The Mathers attached no connotation of superiority to the donor of alms, at least in theory; he was merely an instrument for Providence:

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[1] C. Mather, Meat Out of the Eater (Boston, 1703), p. 41

[2] C. Mather, Utilia (Boston, 1716), pp. 82-3.

[3] C. Mather, The Soul Upon the Wing (Boston, 1722), pp. 23-24.

[4] C. Bridenbaugh, Cities in the Wilderness (New York, 1938), pp. 234-5.

[5] C. Mather, Psalterium Americanum (Boston, 1718), p. 33.

> GOD your SAVIOR saw your *Necessity*, and made Impressions on the Mind of your *Benefactor*. When your *Benefactor* was *Considering the Poor*, and *Considering* whom to *do Good* unto, it was GOD, who brought *You* rather than *Another* into his *Consideration*. And no doubt, He employed His *Good Angel* in the Matter; and sent one of those *Ministering Spirits*, *Ministering to your Necessities*. Your *Benefactor* is but the *Instrument* of Heaven in what is done for you.[2]

This concept of charity, which for some reason seems peculiarly repulsive to Perry Miller,[3] actually permits the recipient of help to ignore the donor rather than (as Miller implies) to grovel before him, and allows an honorable stance before God to the man whom God has chosen to place in poverty. It is a stance which may mortify his sinful pride, but, as any monastic saint under the twofold surgery of vows of obedience and poverty would have recognized, and as Mather clearly emphasizes, this cannot be anything but beneficial. The comparison is appropriate, for Mather actually viewed class structures as though the world were simply a gigantic monastery without walls, a school of obedience to God, to be learned by careful subservience to superiors or responsible management of inferiors. Of course, he felt that the hierarchy of classes was clearly taught in the scriptures, especially the practical portions of Paul's letters.

This assumption of the divine right and origin of class distinctions helps to explain Mather's attitude toward slavery, which in typical Matherian fashion attempts to ameliorate the abuses and harmful side-effects of the institution without radically changing it. The Puritan tradition dealt sparsely and rather ambiguously with this subject. Perkins merely tolerated the institution, hedging it about with a number of imperatives dealing with the duties of masters, and preferring the use of hired servants; but he held that the practice could be considered ethically valid if carefully used and established by positive law in a country, basing this on Paul's toleration of it. He qualified this, however, by a number of precepts from the Old Testament, which effectively removed slavery from its Aristotelian basis in natural inferiority, and made it a result of the Fall and not inherent in the natural order.[1] Baxter, in his Christian Directory, condemned the slave trade as "One of the worst kinds of Thievery in the World,"[2] but did not object to Christians owning slaves if they took pains to bring the gospel to them; and this is substantially the position that Mather adopted. He is fairly reasonably enlightened for a man who frequently admitted the dependence of his own household on slave labor.[3] Mather's A Good Master Well Served (1696), a tract adjudicating both sides of the slave/master relationship, is a reasonably balanced account of his position. After having first stated that his relation is one of three social orders within 'the Domestical Society' -- the Conjugal, Parental, and Herile -- Mather goes on to adjure the owners to assign only good work, and in moderation; to provide adequate food, clothing, and medicine; to keep appropriate discipline among them; and most importantly, to care for their slaves' souls. In the last half of the tract, Mather first advises the slaves on how to be subject first to Christ and only secondarily to men, and then instructs them in obedience, diligence, fidelity and serviceableness to their masters, and the duty to avoid spiritually and economically injurious pastimes such as reading idle romances and gaming. Mather seems genuinely to have the spiritual interests of the slaves at heart and not simply their pacification; he urges to slaves to witness to their masters about Christ, showing by their obedience to them their obedience to God, and even advises occasional civil disobedience.[1] Mather is moved to compassion for the physical indignities suffered by slaves, as he makes clear in a letter to A. W. Boehm: "Our Islands are indeed inhabited by such as are called Christians. But, alas, how dissolute are their Manners! And how inhumane the way of their Subsistence, on the sweat and Blood of Slaves treated with infinite Barbarities!"[2] Most of his concern, however, was channeled toward the conversion of slaves under Christian masters. In July of 1700 he projected a tract exhorting slave-masters to seek the conversion of their servants.[3] In September, 1706, he records that he wrote letters to persons of eminence in the West Indies urging the same cause, and sought through Sir William Ashurst to procure an Act of Parliament to forward that purpose.[4] E. S. Morgan states that most evidence compels the conclusion that not many negro slaves in

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[1] C. Mather, *A Father Departing* (Boston, 1723), p. 24; cf. *Parentator* (Boston, 1724), p. 185; and cf. the many entries in the second volume of the *Diary* dealing with this matter.

[2] C. Mather, *Seasonable Advice to the Poor* (Boston, 1726), p. 3.

[3] P. Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), p. 401.

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[1] C. H. and K. George, The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation (Princeton, 1961), pp. 300-302.

[2] Quoted in C. Mather, Theopolis Americana (Boston, 1710), p. 22.

[3] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 22 (July, 1681); 579 (December, 1706/7); II (New York, 1957), 383 (November, 1716); 663 (December 1721).

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[1] C. Mather, A Good Master Well Served (Boston, 1696), p. 40.

[2] C. Mather, Diary, II (New York, 1957), 412 (February, 1716/17).

[3] Ibid., I (New York, 1957), 356 (July, 1700).

[4] Ibid., 570 (September, 1706).

New England actually became devoted Puritans,[1] but Mather intimates the conversion of those in his own household,[2] and the presence of a fair number of them in his congregation:[3] "I have a Number of black Sheep in my Flock, which it is time for me again, to send for; and pray with them, and preach to them, and enquire into their Conduct, and encourage them, in the ways of Piety: a Religious Society of Negros."[4] Thus the negro religious society which was formed in 1693 was still functioning profitably in 1718.

Mather himself evidently felt that he had an outstanding record as a proponent of negro rights and welfare. His activities on their behalf ranged from wide-scale public efforts, such as his activation and support of the Charity School,[5] to innumerable small acts of charity. He states that he had often done "Good Offices . . . for oppressed and afflicted Slaves . . . without my making in these Records any Mention of them."[6] It is nevertheless unavoidably evident that Mather in today's social context would be attacked as a typical 'white liberal,' since even his defense of the negro is patronizing and riddled with ethnic prejudice. He states magnanimously that all will gather in Heaven at Abraham's Table, "even, the Indians, and the Negro's -- Hear this, ye dark-hued Ones, & under your Despised Complexion, let these News wondrously encourage you to become the Seekers of GOD."[1] The adjectives "poor" and "miserable" invariably accompany the mention of negroes, although this may simply be a reflex of Mather's compassion and not a value judgment. Mather preaches the equality of the races, but seems to use it to tear down the pride of masters rather than to exalt the status of negroes: "All . . . Rational Beings . . . are the Offspring of the First Adam . . . The Difference of Complexion . . . is no Objection . . . We may value our selves on this Account; But, Wilt thou know, O vain Man? Thy Negro is thy Brother."[2] Mather himself was not able to see it quite this objectively, however, when enemies named their slaves after him.

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[1] E. S. Morgan, The Puritan Family (Boston, 1944), p. 73.

[2] C. Mather, Diary, II (New York, 1957), 663 (December, 1721).

[3] Ibid., I (New York, 1957), 278 (November, 1698).

[4] Ibid., II (New York, 1957), 532 (May, 1718).

[5] Ibid., 478 (October, 1717); 663 (December, 1721).

[6] Ibid., 769 (October, 1724).

> A Lieutenant of a Man of War, whom I am a Stranger to, designing to putt an Indignity upon me, has called his Negro-Slave by the Name of COTTON-MATHER.[3]
>
> What has a gracious Lord given me to do, for the Instruction, and Salvation, and Comfort, of the poor Negro's? AND YETT, some, on purpose to affront me, call their Negro's, by the Name of Cotton Mather, that so they may with some Shadow of Truth, assert Crimes as committed by one of that Name, which the Hearers take to be me.[4]

The Mathers, like all their contemporaries, failed to see the corporate basis of the problems they sought to solve by individual acts of charity, and they did not often suggest remedies involving changes in the social organism. It is easy for hindsight to criticize the insufficiency of their remedies for poverty and other social ills without remembering the costliness of these, and the dogged moral courage which drove them into something relatively more difficult than holding and voting correct political opinions and paying taxes cheerfully: the daily struggle to become aware of local need, and the hourly challenge to relinquish varying amounts of money and goods in order to rectify these. It can safely be said that there were no more socially concerned men in America than the Mathers in their era. The fine criteria for this concern in his portrait of the ideal minister are simply a mirror of his own life -- or at least, of the goals he set himself:

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[1] C. Mather, Terra Beata (Boston, 1726), p. 35.

[2] C. Mather, Renatus (Boston, 1725), p. 9.

[3] C. Mather, Diary, II (New York, 1957), 663 (December, 1721).

[4] Ibid., 706 (March, 1724).

> Has he a tender sense of the temptations and afflictions in which many of the people are languishing? Is he as ready to visit the poor as the rich? Will he hazard his own health to visit the sick? Does he keep with him a catalogue of such as are in want? Is he always devising liberal things for them? Scattering his own alms like the showers of Heaven, exciting those of others when his own are exhausted? Making it a common subject of conversation where he comes, what shall be done for such or such a distressed object?[1]

Like the late nineteenth-century evangelicals and many of their descendents in this century, Mather was convinced of the priority of spiritual regeneration in the transformation of society; but unlike these, he was not content to hold that kerygmatic evangelism was all that the church need worry about, and that it should leave the bodies of men untouched by its concern. Like Francke, he felt that spiritual revival on the basis of the existential core of Reformation Christianity was the key to unlocking the hearts of men to deal with social ills:

> Oh, if our *Prayers* may have any share, in obtaining a *Zeal of the Lord of Hosts* to be Enkindled in more of His People, for the Propagating of a *Religion*, which Glorifies Him, and Recovers Mankind unto Felicity! *Then* should we see another face of the corners of *England*, the Highlands of *Scotland*, the boggy Recesses of *Ireland*, than there is yet appearing. Then should we see the *Africans* no longer so treated like meer *Beasts of Burden*, as they are in the Plantations of cruel *Americans*: and the Great Revenues left unto the Charitable Design of *Christianizing* the Negro's, would have some Good Account given of them. *Then* should we see the Noble *Essays to Save a Lost World*, carried as far as the Hunger of *Trade*, now makes Men run thro' *Sea* and *Land*, even to the *Indies*.[2]

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[1] C. Mather, *Love Triumphant* (Boston, 1722), p. 9.

[2] C. Mather, *India Christiana* (Boston, 1721), p. 47.

Mather had only contempt for a docetic orthodoxy which would limit its response to spiritual well-wishing in the presence of human need:

> How runs the Final Sentence of the _Righteous_ but so? _Come, ye Blessed, Inherit the Kingdom; Inasmuch as you were Liberal to my Afflicted Members in the former World._ (Mark) He says not, _For you have been Orthodox in your Opinions_, or, _You have been Eminent in your Professions_, or, _You have been Abundant in your Devotions_; No, _But you have been Liberal to the Miserable_.[1]

Later evangelicals were misled by ignorance, and unwittingly pressured by wealthy supporters, into a truncated parody of Mather's theological position, abdicating the responsibility for Christian social action to specialize in personal redemption. The field of social concern was thus left to more humanistic leadership, which was understandably prejudiced against what it could only regard as a decadent religiosity, riddled with legalism and emotionalism. This unhealthy polarization within the church has remained with us until the present, waiting for the reassertion of a theology of Christian experience which can harmonize the concerns for individual salvation and prophetic social involvement, as Mather and Francke were, in part, able to do.

3. _The Expectation of Revival_

A. _The Mood of the Jeremiad_

What was the response of the city of Boston, and Mather's own congregation, to all his labors and projections of good will? There was a certain amount of gratitude toward Mather among the fairly large group of his friends, and there were steady accessions to church membership and several larger ingatherings of converts; but there were rarely any sign of widespread spiritual awakening. Mather occasionally has a good word for his congregation, at least in public. In his father's funeral sermon he tells them that "He ever look'd on you, and spoke of you, as a very Loving People: And he very much ascribed the Prolongation of his Life unto your praying for it."[1] He is grateful even in private for the collection taken up by a group of his people to relieve him of the debt incurred in his settlement of his wife's husband's estate.[2] On the other hand, most of Mather's private ruminations have to do with the shortcomings of his people. Late in his career, he lamented that so little of what had been preached had gotten through to them and become real in their lives: "I am astonished, I am astonished at the prodigious Ignorance of our People in Matters of Religion, after all the Instruction bestow'd upon them. Among other instances, their foolish Talk, about the Decrees of GOD, is notorious."[3] The abuse here complained of is probably the same that Mather commented on fifteen years earlier:

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[1] _Ibid._, pp. 27-8.

> In my continual Addresses unto People of all sorts, to sett upon the Practice of serious Religion, I am still answered by them, that they can't. They fearfully abuse the Doctrine of Man's Inability to turn to God and walk with Him, until supernatural Grace enable him, as if it were a very pretty Apology for their Continuance in their Slothfulness and Wickedness.[4]

Mather's accomodations in presenting this doctrine were evidently not enough to eliminate the problem. We have already commented on the concern expressed in his sermons with regard to those who neglect the Lord's Supper, and this is a refrain also in the diaries.[5]

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[1] C. Mather, A Father Departing (Boston, 1723), p. 28.

[2] C. Mather, Diary, II (New York, 1957), 739 (July, 1724).

[3] Ibid., 664 (December, 1721).

[4] Ibid., I (New York, 1957), 573 (October, 1706).

[5] Ibid., II (New York, 1957), 251 (November, 1713); 462 (July, 1717); 783 (January, 1724/5).

The problem in the congregation most remarked upon, however, is its response to affluence: "Worldly-mindedness, the Praecipuum crimen humani Generis; there is nothing my Flock is more in danger of."[1] A concommitant to the congregation's preoccupation with wealth is its indifference to spiritual mission: "We have religious People, whose nearest Relatives are poor, vain, carnal Creatures, utterly destitute of the Symptomes of Regeneration. And yett they seem very easy and thoughtless about them. While they are in this World well provided for, and carry it well towards them, they seem to take no further Thought about them."[2]

There are four or five crisis points referred to in Mather's private record of the life of his congregation which cast more light on the problems described above, and on the developing spiritual and social condition of Boston as Mather's life and ministry proceeded. The first occurs in 1697 and 1698, when Mather had a premonition that there were "secret and horrid Sinners, in our church," which later proved to be accurate in regard to a number of people, including "one very criminal Adulteress," "one, whom I had formerly, with many Cries to Heaven, rescued from the Hands of evil Angels, which had a bodily Possession of her;" and also one "convicted of horrid Stealing and Lying." Mather characteristically felt that these sins called for his own deep humiliation before God, "lest the Lord should bee offended at mee, for the Iniquities of those that are under my Charge;" and he also "implored the Presence of the Holy Spirit of Christ with mee, in the Censure, wherewith I purpose the next Lord's-day, to shutt the Leper out of the Camp."[3] The second crisis, a little over a decade later, was indicative of a much more widespread disaffection within the congregation. It began with a stirring among some young people in the flock, who were deliberately gambling in order to shake off the conviction of sin from Mather's sermons.[1] Shortly after this, Mather heard of several drunkards and adulterers; again he considered himself implicated in the sin: "On this Occasion, first, I would exceedingly humble myself before the Lord, on the Account of my own manifold Sinfulness. Then I would mightily plead the great Sacrifice for the Congregation, that the Wrath of God may not break out against the Flock."[2] In immediately subsequent entries, he notes so many "wicked actions" done among the flock that he finds his "flesh trembles for Fear of God."[3] Later in the same year, he heard of some young men "undoing their Souls by running away from God, into great Apostasies and Impieties,"[4] and noted that there were two or three members of the church fallen into open scandal.[5] Finally, in December of this year, he heard of many young people in his flock joining in "a Frolick, a revelling Feast, and Ball" - - and on Christmas night, which was almost more of an abomination to a Puritan than promiscuous dancing itself.[6]

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[1] Ibid., 79 (June, 1711).

[2] Ibid., 120 (October, 1711).

[3] Ibid., I (New York, 1957), 214 (January, 1897); 242 (December, 1697); 260-1 (May, 1698).

These isolated but increasingly numerous outbreakings of scandal revealed the presence of a subterranean restlessness in Mather's church, which finally erupted in a third and major period of crisis, in which a number of the congregation began "swarming into a new Meeting house." Mather faced the issue at the outset with a great deal of spiritual courage.

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[1] Ibid., II (New York, 1957), 50 (March, 1711).

[2] Ibid., 65 (April, 1711).

[3] Ibid., 67 (April, 1711); 69 (May, 1711).

[4] Ibid., 123 (November, 1711).

[5] Ibid., 131 (November, 1711).

[6] Ibid., 146 (December, 1711).

> A very great Number of the Flock . . . imagine our large Meeting-house to be overstock'd with people . . . They are therefore violently sett upon building a new Meeting-house; in which Affayr my Concern is the greater, because it proves a Grief of Mind unto my Aged Parent . . . I must treat these People, very lovingly, candidly, courteously and prudently. I must keep a mighty Guard on my Words, and all my Wayes, and on the very Frames of my Heart, as lying all open to the View of God . . . My God, I look up unto thee![1]

Mather continued to pray for humility and the ability to finish this matter patiently and prudently, without disputing or murmuring, for some months; but gradually he came to see that the motives for the "swarming" were mainly reducible to social pride, and began to emit private outbursts of contempt.

> God calls me, in an extraordinary Manner, to be armed for the Trials, which I may undergo in a Church, breaking all to peeces, thro' the Impertinencies of a proud Crue, that must have Pues for their despicable Families; a Church so forsaken of God, that there are no Men appearing in it, who consult or desire the Prosperity of it; a Church that seems to be ripe for something little short of a miserable Dissolution. O my God, and my Saviour; Help me to look up unto thee, for sufficient Measures of Grace, to encounter these uneasy Circumstances![2]

A year later he has nearly given up on the church:

> The poor Flock, the poor Flock, whereof I am the Servant; a poor, foolish, senseless People; how unfruitful, and how ungrateful! How abandoned of Heaven to the neglecting and even confounding of their own Interests! I am so strangely at a Loss, what to do further for them! I am daily serving them in all the Methods my barren Mind can think of! And when the Article of, what is to be done for them, returns upon my Meditations, I am not so long plodding upon any Article, before I find out some Invention to do further Good. This Morning, after long Deliberation, I can think of nothing to purpose, but this; I will enlarge my Prayers, that the Wrath of God may be turned away from the poor Flock.[3]

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[1] Ibid., 181 (February, 1713).

[2] Ibid., 194 (March, 1713).

[3] Ibid., 278 (January, 1714).

Among the subsequent diary entries there is hardly one that speaks of a healthy condition in the church. Seekers after pews continue to desert the church, but Mather typically does not attack the system of pew-rental but those who allow their social pride to be enflamed by it.[1] Other points which concern him are the tendency of members to fight over small points of church order,[2] the suspicion of the presence of unregenerate pretenders to holiness in the flock,[3] and the obstinacy of certain of the more important leaders in the church.[4] The next several years of the diary are punctuated with Mather's groans over the intransigence of the church,[5] until a new threat arises:

> The ungodly Doings in our New-North Church, have caused an Assembly of enraged, violent, boisterous Men, to build a new and very large Brick Meeting house, the finest in the Countrey. To fill their House they prevail with a mighty Number of the Flock which I serve, to join with them; and the Religion of Pues which with a proud, vain, formal People seems to be now the chief Religion of the Town, is too powerful a Temptation for them.[6]

The new church drew off another "swarming multitude," among them many valuable leaders and a considerable number of young people and mariners, two classes to which Mather had devoted special attention.[7] Some years later Mather speaks of the imminence of an apostasy of some of the flock even to the Church of England.[8]

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[1] Ibid., 353 (May, 1716); 359 (July, 1716).

[2] Ibid., 366 (August, 1716).

[3] Ibid., 387 (December, 1716).

[4] Ibid., 519 (March, 1718).

[5] Ibid., 524 (March, 1718); 526 (April, 1718); 531 (May, 1718); 561 (October, 1718).

[6] Ibid., 615 (April, 1721).

[7] Ibid., 616 (May, 1721); 617 (May, 1721); 622 (June, 1721).

[8] Ibid., 708 (March, 1724).

There is every evidence, then, that the process of cultural change enveloping Boston and moving it toward liberal manners and a more liberal mind was reflected in a relatively unrestrained movement within Mather's own congregation. As for the movement outside the congregation, Mather gives us some eye-witness accounts of it, especially in the last fifteen years of his life. He remarks on the "sett of wretched, idle, gaming Fellowes in this Town, whose Families are starving in great miseries" -- and resolves to move the societies to punish these, but does not mention provision for the families -- and the prevalence of houses of prostitution (again the remedy is a punitive move by the societies).[1] He complains of difficulties with the other Boston ministers due to one particular opponent[2] -- probably Ebenezer Pemberton -- and some years later, he mentions dissension within The General Assembly "by reason of three unhappy men, who are representatives of this town."[3] In 1721 he expresses himself at length concerning a problem which seems to overlap from the town into his own congregation,

> . . . a very wicked Party in this Countrey who fill the Land with Strife and Sin, and who are drawing the People into continual Snares, and into such Actions and Follies, as are a Blemish unto us, and threaten to bring horrible Oppresion and Slavery upon us . . . What can I do, for this poor, ungrateful and unworthy Country, but cry unto GOD; and unto my SAVIOUR, who has more Pity and Patience for a Congregation full of Murmuring than ever a Moses could express for his froward People?[4]

During the Summer and Fall of this year, the plague of smallpox, and the famous incident of Mather's pioneering research into inoculation, polarized a large part of the town against Mather, and he seems almost ready to give the city up:

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[1] Ibid., 442 (March, 1717).

[2] Ibid., 342 (March, 1712).

[3] Ibid., 382 (November, 1716).

[4] Ibid., 607 (March, 1721).

> The Town is become almost an Hell upon Earth, a City full of Lies, and Murders, and Blasphemies.[1]
>
> This miserable Town, is a dismal Picture and Emblem of Hell; Fire with Darkness filling of it, and a lying Spirit reigning there; many members of our Churches, have had a fearful Share in the false Reports, and blasphemous Speeches, and murderous Wishes in which the Town is become very guilty before the Lord.[2]
>
> This abominable Town, treats me in a most malicious, and murderous Manner, for my doing as CHRIST would have me to do, in saving the Lives of the People from an horrible Death.[3]

It was in this month that an unknown assasin unsuccessfully bombed Mather's room with a grenade.[4] Mather felt sure that another attempt would be made, but four days later his fear and anger had subsided into a dogged determination to do good to the town whether it wanted it or not: "G [ood] D[evice]. Sundry Lives are to be saved, by my pressing the Inoculation of the Small-Pox upon them."[5] The courage here is as admirable as any quality in the man. But there is a sharp asperity about Mather's private utterances relative to the town and its leaders from this point onwards. In 1724 he speaks favorably of the ministers' resumption of days of prayer -- "The Times loudly call for it"[6] -- but a year later he confessed to Thomas Prince in a letter that "To be free with you, the Ministers of this Town appear to me, the most unbrotherly and unsocial Tribe of their Profession, that I beleeve, is in the whole World."[7]

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[1] Ibid., 639 (August, 1721).

[2] Ibid., 641 (August, 1721).

[3] Ibid., 655 (November, 1721).

[4] Ibid., 658 (November, 1721).

[5] Ibid., 659 (November, 1721).

[6] Ibid., 700 (March, 1724).

[7] Ibid., 792 (February, 1795).

We must look now at Mather's public ministerial comment on the spiritual decline which he observed and privately noted during his lifetime. We have already set forth the thesis that Mather's use of what Perry Miller calls the Jeremiad is considerably less frequent and strident than Miller implies.[1] It is significant that the largest block of utterances of this sort were produced within a single decade, 1690-1700, when Mather was still digesting his father's chiliastic philosophy of history and was also most under the influence of the sermonic models of the last generation. Five of these are full-length essays in the form, counting the *Magnalia*, which may be considered its apotheosis.[2] A number of other works allude to New England's spiritual decline in small passages of lament.[3] The tone and the type of analyses in these works is indeed that of the traditional Jeremiad: "The Lord our God, seems to have a peculiar Controversy with the Rising *Generation* of *New-England*."[4]

> And what has been the *Voice of the Trumpet*? Not Uncertain, but Universally concurring in this thing. *Reformation*, or *Desolation*! *Reformation*, or *Desolation*! and, I pray, where do we find much of the demanded *Reformation*? . . . our *Iniquities* are the worst of *Prodigies*: A thousand *Comets* Blazing over our heads . . . would be less Cloudy Premonitions of Impending Evils, than these Prodigious Iniquities.[5]

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[1] P. Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), pp. 179, 183-4, 2-3-4, 206, 305-9, 330, 332-3, 338, 366.

[2] C. Mather, *The Serviceable Man* (Boston, 1690); *The Present State of New England* (Boston, 1690); *A Midnight Cry* (Boston, 1692); *The Short History of New England* (Boston, 1694); *Magnalia Christi Americana* (London, 1702).

[3] C. Mather, *Small Offers* (Boston, 1689); *The Wonderful Works of God* (Boston, 1690); *Addresses to Old Men, Young Men, and Little Children* (Boston, 1690); *Unum Necessarium* (Boston, 1693); *The Day, and the Work of the Day* (Boston, 1693); *Early Religion Urged* (Boston, 1694); *Observanda* (Boston, 1695).

[4] C. Mather, *A Midnight Cry* (Boston, 1692), p. 49.

[5] C. Mather, *The Day, and the Work of the Day* (Boston, 1693), p. 60.

The evils touched on by Mather include those of contention, ingratitude,[1] neglect of education, sloth in repastoring churches, contempt of public servants,[2] and violation of the seventh commandment;[3] but the principle roots of the problem appear to him to lie in the worldliness of the older generation which has made them spiritually impotent, and the consequent unregeneracy of so many in the rising generation:

> The chief hazard and symptom of degeneracy, is in the verification of that old observation, . . . "Religion brought forth Prosperity, and the daughter destroyed the mother."[4]
>
> What is the reason of this horrible Neglect? Why, men are so taken up with secular and sensual matters, that they have no leisure to acquaint themselves with a precious Jesus? A filthy Lust, and a wretched World, are the things for the sake of which, a matchless Christ is Neglected by Impenitent Unbelievers . . . But among all the deadly Symptoms which threaten us with a speedy Ruine, there is none more ghastly, than the ignorance, the wildness, the lewdness found in so great a part of the Rising Generation . . . It was the last and worst of all the Egyptian plagues, That a Child was dead in every house.[5]

But it is highly significant that the remedies proposed for spiritual degeneration in these sermons are strictly evangelical and not legal, as in the case of some of the recommendations of the Reforming Synod; and it is especially noteworthy that over half the documents conclude by urging prayer for the outpouring of God's Spirit as the answer.[6] It was natural even at this point for Mather to turn to revival as the ultimate answer to decline, since his father had voiced hopes for this as early as 1678.[1] It is also interesting that all but two of the Jeremiads in this first decade of Mather's published works appear before 1696, when he expected the imminence of a new and unprecedented spiritual awakening.

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[1] Ibid., p. 62.

[2] C. Mather, Unum Necessarium (Boston, 1693), pp. i-ii.

[3] C. Mather, Early Religion Urged, p. 8.

[4] C. Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana, I (Hartford, 1855), 63.

[5] C. Mather, Addresses to Old Men, Young Men, and Little Children (Boston, 1690), pp. 17, 90.

[6] C. Mather, The Wonderful Works of God (Boston, 1690), pp. 35-6; Addresses to Old Men, Young Men, and Little Children (Boston, 1690), p.37; The Serviceable Man (Boston, 1690), p. 55; A Midnight Cry (Boston, 1692), p. 51; Magnalia Christi Americana, II (Hartford, 1855), 355.

In the next twenty years of Mather's ministry, from 1700-1720, there are fewer instances of the Jeremiad style than we can find in all his writings prior to 1696. There are only two real Jeremiads published during the period.[2] A number of other sermons strike the Jeremiad note, probing a number of signs of decline, chiefly religious apathy:

> *Religious Conference*, Alas, Tis almost vanished out of the World . . . *Religion* it self is almost vanished. If the *matters of Religion* lay much on the *Hearts* of men, it could not be, but that their *Tongues* would naturally fall now and then into *Religious Conference* . . . I have heard some Younger than my self Lament it; 'That when they were *Children*, . . . all the discourse was, about the Delicious *Truths* delivered in such or such a *Sermon*; about the *Marks* of a Regenerate State; about the Alsufficiency of *God*; about the Preciousness of *Christ*; about the *Suitableness* of the *Promises*; about the *Coming* and *Kingdom* of the Lord; and the like. But now, they cannot hear one word of any such matters; All the Talk runs, upon the most Sorry Things imaginable; the Talk is generally *impertinent*, frequently *impious*. If any man go to speak about those things, which every man should count the Things of greatest Concernment . . . all the Company stare upon him, as if a man of *Strange Language* were dropped from the Clouds among them.[3]

But in half these sermons there is either an encouragement to prayer for revival or else an outright statement of Mather's expectancy for revival. In the final years of Mather's life, from 1720-1727, the Jeremiad note begins to sound again with comparative frequency. Mather composed three full-scale Jeremiads during this period which are of significance. The first of these, The Ambassadors Tears (1721), subtitled "An unsuccessful ministry bewailed," is conventional in its analysis of the problem, but sounds an unusual note of tired self-accusation against the Puritan ministry as partially responsible for the decline.[1] Suspiria Vinctorum (1726) is remarkable in that it is a Jeremiad for the entire Christian world, not just for the covenant nation of New England, surveying principally the martyrdom of Protestants under persecution by Rome and the loss of Protestant territory, but issuing in a treatment of world-wide spiritual decline among the Reformed churches.[2] During the remaining years of his life, beset with personal problems and the most blatant public evidences of cultural decline in Western Christianity, Mather continued to face these threatening symptoms honestly; but he still maintained that revival should be sought, and might be imminent.

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[1] I. Mather, *Pray for the Rising Generation* (Boston, 1678). This rather remarkable sermon is considerably more evangelical in its remedies than the Reforming Synod of the next year, underlining the fact that Cotton Mather's pre-Revivalism is rooted in his father's theology.

[2] C. Mather, *Testimony Against Evil Customs* (Boston, 1719); *The Good Old Way* (Boston, 1706).

[3] C. Mather, *The Rules of a Visit* (Boston, 1705), p. 31; and cf. *Private Meetings Animated* (Boston, 1706), p. 1; *The Wayes and Joyes of Early Piety* (Boston, 1712), pp. 38-41; *Zelotes* (Boston, 1717), *passim*; *A Voice from Heaven* (Boston, 1719), p. 11.

B. The Prayer of Expectancy

In the face of his discouraging experience with his own congregation and the city of Boston, and his wide knowledge of the presence of spiritual decline elsewhere in the Christian world, it is remarkable that Mather's basic mood over the years is one of militant optimism. Apart from his own temperament, three theological factors contributed to this outlook.

The first factor was an assumption about the history of the church. Mather's philosophy of history, like that of most Puritans and the later Pietists, assumed that the Reformation of the sixteenth century had been only a partial restoration of the New Testament form of the church, as the Anabaptists had insisted.[1] In his first utterances on the need to perfect this 'half-Reformation,' Mather seems to lean heavily on the necessity to bring the discipline and government of the church into line with biblical prescriptions: "It must be acknowledged that, in the Protestant Reformation, there has been a great *neglect* and *defect* as to what concerns the discipline and government of Christ in his church. As the *apostacy* was gradual, so has the *Reformation* been."[2] Mather agrees with Owen that this was providential, since he admits that if the Protestants had sought to change all the things initially which the Puritans felt like changing, they would have unchurched the world. He seems at this point still to have conceived of the necessary new Reformation entirely in terms of 'the religion of the second commandment,' i.e. in the establishment of biblically instituted worship, discipline, membership requirements, and polity: "From the Beginning of the Reformation, there have been a Generation of Godly Men wanting to pursue the Reformation of Religion in Doctrine, Worship, Discipline, and Government, according to the Word of God, and the Example of the best Reformed Churches."[1] There is no mention here of the revitalization of interior godliness, but in the early 1700's this came to be an increasing concern with Mather, and he began to define the new Reformation in slightly different terms. In An Advice to the Churches of the Faithful, Briefly Reporting the Present State of the World, and Bespeaking That Fervent Prayer for the Church Which This Time Calleth for . . . (1702), Mather observes that "The faithful Reformers have sometimes bewayled it, That the Protestants have Reformed nothing but their Doctrines . . . ," but describes that which is lacking as the reformation of lives and manners, to be remedied by prayer for "a wondrous Effusion of the Holy Spirit."[2] By 1715 he had come to define the problem as a neglect of stress on sanctification and the preaching of cheap grace, so that he echoes the analysis of Continental Pietism:

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[1] C. Mather, The Ambassadors Tears (Boston, 1721), pp. 15, 25.

[2] C. Mather, Suspiria Vinctorum (Boston, 1726), passim.

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[1] Martin Schmidt points out that the goal of Continental Pietism was always the re-establishment of first-century Christianity, and the finishing of the first and incomplete Reformation: "*Die erste Reformation erschien den Pietisten als ein richtiger, aber steckengebliebener Ansatz. Mystische Spiritualisten und Pietisten hatten die tiefeingewürzelte und bleibende Überzeugung, dass Luthers Reformation durch die nachfolgende Orthodoxie weitgehend steriliert oder mindestens beiseitegelegt worden sei. Die erste Reformation war in ihren Augen eine Reformation von Institutionen.*" (M. Schmidt, "*Der Ökumenische Zinn des deutschen Pietismus und seine Auswirkungen in der Bibelverbreitung*," in O. Söhngen, ed., *Die Bleibende Bedeutung des Pietismus* [Wittenburg, 1960], p. 71). Thus the main theme of Spener's *Pia Desideria* is, as Stoeffler indicates, the incomplete reformation, lamented by Luther himself, in which an original concern for internal piety was smothered by Caesaropapism, an *ex opere operato* interpretation of the Word and sacraments, an overstress on forensic justification, and an imbalanced emphasis on purity of doctrine combined with a rationalistic extrapolation of biblical truth into unbiblical systems (E. Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* [Leiden, 1965], p. 235). Later Pietists did not hesitate to charge Luther himself with retrogression from the main work of interior reform. Spener himself compared the church of the sixteenth century to the children of Israel, after they had left Babylon but had not yet rebuilt the temple or the city of Jerusalem, and considered himself one who fulfilled Luther rather than simply reiterating his teaching. (D. W. Brown, "The Problem of Subjectivism in Pietism" [unpublished doctoral thesis, Northwestern University, 1962], p. 23). Mather's friend and correspondent, A. W. Boehm, put the matter quite vigorously in his preface to Arndt's *Of True Christianity* (2nd Eng. ed., London, 1720), p. xxvii: "This hath been in all Ages one of the Sources of Corruption. Many have presumed to value themselves and their Way of Worship, upon a Scheme of Religion, introduced by some great and eminent Men: But then they neglected to stir up in themselves a Spirit of holy Emulation, whereby to answer not only the external Form settled by them, but also the inward Zeal, the Love, Wisdom, the indefatigable Diligence, and other divine Characters, which rendered their Predecessors so conspicuous in their Time . . . What hath been said concerning the first Zeal, and how apt Men are to slide from it, is manifest from the Conduct of Luther himself."

[2] C. Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, II (Hartford, 1855), 74.

> It is too just an Observation of a Late Learned and Famous Writer, That the Zeal of the Reformed Churches, hath mostly run out, in declaring that Path of Faith, which respects mainly our Justification by the Righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ Imputed unto us. But that the notorious and scandalous want of Godliness that so

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[1] C. Mather, Eleutheria (London, 1698), p. 38.

[2] C. Mather, An Advice to the Churches (Boston, 1702), pp. 9-11.

> disparages the Protestant World, very much arises from their so little Studying and Applying another Doctrine. Even that of Faith in the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, which He has promised unto Believers, that by His Assistance we may become Full of Goodness, and in the conquest of our Corruptions, and carry on Holiness to Perfection in the Fear of God.[1]

A part of Mather's mind has thus come round to a position on the *semper reformanda* which is counter to his old approach: he is now an ecumenist who is partly willing to overlook structural differences and even embrace an Arminian as a brother in Christ, and what he wants reformed is basically the human heart. We have noted that he is conventional in his defense of the Congregational polity to the very end of his life; but in the face of the decline of the Congregational churches both in New England and the mother country, contrasting to the rebirth of Lutheranism in Pietism, he simply cannot locate the deepest need of the churches in the areas of polity and discipline. So in his world Jeremiad, *Suspiria Vinctorum*, (1726), he returns to the theme of cheap grace:

> The Churches of the Reformation, it has long been complained of them, that when they have Reformed their Doctrines, they have not proportionably Reformed their Manners. It was the Complaint of Luther in his Day . . . People are as immoral in their Lives now, as they were while they were under the Slavery of Popery . . . Among the Protestants, how frequent, how common, how Epidemical, is that most offensive Spectacle, The Truth held in Unrighteousness! . . . And where Immoralities are less conspicuous, even There also, the General Decay of Real and Vital PIETY, Verily, it has a very Threatning Aspect upon them.[2]

The second theological factor contributing to Mather's lifelong mood of revivalist expectation was a logical extension of Calvin's emphasis on divine sovereignty, and especially his unique stress on the work of the Holy Spirit in redemption. In Mather's ultimate spiritualization of the

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[1] C. Mather, *Benedictus* (Boston, 1715), p. 4.

[2] C. Mather, *Suspiria Vinctorum* (Boston, 1726), p. 44.

Puritan concept of the 'completed Reformation,' in which this tends to become identified with inner transformation rather than exterior reform, there is an unprecedented stress on the necessity of the reviving and illuminating power of the Holy Spirit. Mather was first of all convinced that the vitality of Christians was fundamentally dependent neither on the purity of the ministry they were under, nor on the willingness of their hearts to respond, but ultimately on the sovereign action of God Himself, making the Word fruitful and penetrating the darkened human mind:

> The *Success* of the *Ministry* depends on the *Gracious Influences* of the Holy Spirit; that *South-Wind* blowing on the *Garden*.[1]
>
> 'Tis no rare Thing, for the *Great Things* of the *Gospel*, to remain *Strange Things* unto those that have the Revelation brought unto them. The *Mystery* of CHRIST may be preached unto People for many Years together, and yet that *Great Mystery of Godliness* be little apprehended with them! they can give but a very poor and mean Account of it. The People who *sat in Darkness*, may see a great *Light*, and yet be so Stupid and Sottish and Unattentive as to continue in a most unaccountable Darkness after all.[2]

Since the quality of Christianity in an era is thus dependent not on the excellence of the seed, nor the quality of the soil, but on the 'weather' of the Spirit's sovereign operation in men's hearts, Mather is led to stress continually, as the most important practical answer to the problem of spiritual decline, the concerted prayer of Christians for the charismatic empowering of their ministers and the rising generation.

> *Praying for Souls* is a main stroke in the *winning of Souls*. If once the *Spirit of Grace* be poured out upon a *Soul*, that *Soul is won* immediately.
>
> . . . .
>
> Yea, who can tell, how far the Prayers of the *Saints*, & of a few *Saints*, may *prevail* with Heaven to obtain that *Grace*, that shall win whole *Peoples and Kingdoms to serve the Lord*? . . . It may be, the Nations of the world, would quickly be *won* from the Idolatries of *Paganism*, and the Impostures of *Mahomet*, if a *Spirit of Prayer*, were

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[1] C. Mather, *The Ambassadors Tears* (Boston, 1721), p. 13.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 6.

at work among the People of God.[1]

We have already commented on the fact that from the very beginning of his ministry Mather was calling on Christians to pray privately and corporately for revival, especially for the conversion of the rising generation.[2] He refers to this as a new practice in 1692, so that it probably arose among his father's generation;[3] but he complains even in 1704 that is a remedy more discussed than practiced.[4] In Private Meetings Animated (1706) and the Essays to Do Good (1710) Mather urged such corporate prayer meetings to be conducted on a regular bimonthly basis in the young men's societies;[5] and in Suspiria Vinctorum (1726), he proposed regular and synchronized ecumenical days of prayer for revival, to be conducted among all evangelical Protestants -- a proposal later taken up by Edwards -- and established a monthly midweek meeting which was the origin of the weekly prayer meetings typical in the nineteenth century.[6]

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[1] C. Mather, The Nets of Salvation (Boston, 1704), pp. 40-2.

[2] Cf. C. Mather, The Wonderful Works of God (Boston, 1690), pp. 35-6; Addresses to Old Men, and Young Men, and Little Children (Boston, 1690), p. 37; The Serviceable Man (Boston, 1690), p. 55; A Midnight Cry (Boston 1692), p. 51; Early Religion Urged (Boston, 1694); The Short History of New England (Boston, 1694); The Nets of Salvation (Boston, 1704), pp. 40-2; A Faithful Monitor (Boston, 1704); Private Meetings Animated (Boston, 1706; Bonifacius (Boston, 1710); Successive Generations (Boston, 1715), p. 28; The Duty of Children (Boston, 1703), p. 43; American Tears upon the Ruins of the Greek Churches (Boston, 1701), p. 25; Religious Societies (Boston, 1724), pp. 3-4; Suspiria Vinctorum (Boston, 1726), pp. 20-1.

[3] C. Mather, A Midnight Cry (Boston, 1692), p. 51.

[4] C. Mather, The Nets of Salvation (Boston, 1704), p. 41.

[5] C. Mather, Private Meetings Animated (Boston, 1706), p. 19; Bonifacius (Boston, 1710), p. 87.

[6] C. Mather, Suspiria Vinctorum (Boston, 1726), p. 11. Mather intimates that the proposal originated among "Christians of the Finer Mould" in America, and thus presumably he is the ultimate author.

> Wherefore under a *Terror of GOD*, it becomes us to *Labour fervently in our Prayer* . . . That the Glorious *GOD of our Life*, would Revive Decay'd PIETY . . . and that His *Quickening Spirit* would not withdraw any further.
>
> . . . .
>
> *Lord, Revive thy Work in the midst of the Nations*. . . . Doubtless, if they that Fear GOD would *speak often one to another* of these things, and the People of GOD were more fully apprised of them, the *Spirit of PRAYER for the Holy People under Sufferings*, would be more awakened, and a *Book of Remembrance* would be *written*, for them who *think upon His Name* and Cause in the World. Many private Christians, whose *Life is hid*, and among the rest, even those *Hidden Ones*, many gracious Handmaids of the Lord, whose *Prayer*, a Great *Melancthon* once in this Case laid no little stress upon, would *stir up themselves to take hold of GOD*.[1]

This stress on prayer for the 'moving of the Spirit' became so foundational in the development of American Revivalism that even Charles Finney, who had abandoned the Augustinian rationale for such dependence, still emphatically stressed the necessity of group prayer in his *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*.[2]

The third theological factor prompting Mather toward the expectation of revival, his eschatology, has already been discussed. The remarkable practical effect of his millenialism on his own spiritual experience is revealed in a long series of diary entries spanning his lifetime.

Mather's own prayers began to yield a series of particular faiths concerning the coming millenial revival of Christendom in 1696, and the period from 1696-1702 in his Diary is filled with references to these, which varyingly define the coming event as the Second Coming, a reformation of manners, a political "shaking" among the nations, and an outpouring of the Spirit. In February, 1696, he began to pray for a revival of the interests of evangelical Christianity in England, Scotland, and Ireland.[3]

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[1] C. Mather, *Suspiria Vinctorum* (Boston, 1726), pp. 20-22.

[2] C. G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, ed. by W. G. McLoughlin (Cambridge, Mass., 1960).

[3] C. Mather, *Diary*, I (New York, 1957), 184 (February, 1696/7).

In April, he found himself, while in the midst of a sermon, uttering "under a marvellous Impression upon my Spirit" a prophecy about the 'shaking' of these countries.[1] These are of course the three nations, or national stocks, which were to be most affected by the coming Awakening, either in the home countries or among American immigrants. About the same time he began to be persuaded of an imminent "Revolution" in another nation important in the interests of Reformed Christianity, France.[2] He continued to pray particularly for the British Isles and France, and later in the year added a premonitory concern for a "Revolution upon the Turkish Empire."[3] Entries concerning these international concerns continue during the ensuing months,[4] and in February, 1697, Mather started to gather around him a select group of Christian leaders to study "the great Reformation at hand" and "the Characters and Approaches of the Kingdome of our Lord Jesus Christ."[5] In December of 1697, Mather was discoursing to this group on I Thess. 5:3, noting that a concern for peace among the nations would precede "the second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ . . . with a sudden Destruction on the Kingdome of Antichrist," when news arrived from England of the Peace of Reswyck and of "such an Overthrow given to the Turk, as looks Like the second wo passing away."[6] In May, 1698, Mather felt his premonitions about the

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[1] Ibid., 191 (April, 1696).

[2] Ibid., 198 (July, 1696); 202-3 (September, 1696).

[3] Ibid., 207 (October, 1696); 212-13 (January, 1697).

[4] Ibid., 214 (January, 1697); 222, 223 (February, 1696/7); 233 (September, 1697); 241 (November, 1697); 242 (December, 1697); 259 (May, 1698).

[5] Ibid., 224-6 (February, 1696/7).

[6] Ibid., 243 (December, 1697).

British Isles and France partially fulfilled by a suppression of moral disorders, by parliamentary proclamation, in Scotland, and a resurgence of Protestantism in Orange.[1] He continued to have further premonitions of revival, however.[2]

From this point onward in the Diaries the references to the coming renovation grow sparse during a period lasting until 1716. In June, 1711, Mather examines the "late strange Extasies and Prophecies" in southern France and Britain rather suspiciously to determine whether these are signs of awakening.[3] An entry in August, 1716, seems to mark a decided rebirth of his particular faith about the future, together with a clearer definition of its spiritual nature:

> 'We can do very Little. Our Encumbrances are insuperable; our Difficulties are infinite. If He would please, to fulfil the ancient Prophecy, of pouring out the Spirit on all Flesh, and revive the extraordinary and supernatural Operations with which He planted His Religion in the primitive Times of Christianity, and order a Descent of His holy Angels to enter and possess His Ministers, and cause them to speak with the Tongues of Men under the Energy of Angels, and fly thro' the World with the everlasting Gospel to preach unto the Nations, wonderful Things would be done immediately; His Kingdome would make those Advances in a Day, which under our present and fruitless Labours, are scarce made in an Age. I pleaded, that His Word had given us Reason to hope for a Return of these Powers, and for the making bare the Arm of the Lord before the Nations; and He has promised His holy Spirit unto them that ask Him. I pleaded, that His diligent Servants, having preferred the sanctifying Influences of His holy Spirit, above any miraculous Powers, and been humbly willing to undergo any Fatigues for the Service of His Kingdome, seem'd somewhat prepared for these Favours of Heaven. And having made this Representation, that Orders may be given by the glorious Lord, for a Descent of His mighty Angels, to give wonderful Shakes unto the World, and so sieze upon the Ministers of His Kingdome, as to do Things which will give an irresistible Efficacy unto their Ministry; I concluded with a strong Impression on my

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[1] Ibid., 262 (June, 1698).

[2] Ibid., 301-2 (June, 1699); 321 (November, 1699); 347 (April, 1700); 365 (September, 1700); 397-8 (April, 1701); 403 (September, 1701).

[3] Ibid., II (New York, 1957), 83 (June, 1711).

> Mind; They are coming! They are coming! They are coming! They will quickly be upon us; and the World shall be shaken wonderfully![1]

Subsequent passages repeat this strong conviction, emphasizing the imminent descent of angels, and particularly the prophecy of the outpouring of the Spirit in Joel 2.[2] This whole series of particular faiths is centered on the concept of the coming revival as a new Pentecost to reinvigorate the churches with life and the power for missionary propagation, "a Return of the Showers which first introduced and propagated Christianity in the World."[3]

During the course of his life, Mather discerned a number of harbingers of the coming millenial revival. Some of these involved the early conversion and spiritual precocity of children, which had been a focus of interest among the first generations in New England, and which Edwards was later to mark as one of the signs of the Great Awakening.[4] In 1693 he remarks upon the production of scholars and ministers in the young men's societies -- one can almost hear the unspoken reference to himself -- as a good sign for the future.[5] He speaks also of a revival in a Scottish church following a night of corporate prayer, in which 500 were converted,[6] and of several miracles occurring in London.[7] But there is no doubt that during the decades from 1690-1710 Mather found the main support for his hopes, and perhaps the impetus for their genesis, in the contagious enthusiasm of the British reforming societies (and even Francke felt these to be "comfortable signs that the Spirit of God is now about a great work to put a new face on the whole Christian Church"[1]). This perhaps explains the fact that Mather's early references to the coming Reformation, in his first burst of enthusiasm for it between 1696-1702, define it more externally, with reference to manners and institutions, than his later statements.

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[1] Ibid., 365-6 (August, 1716).

[2] Ibid., 371 (September, 1716); 376 (October, 1716); 387 (December, 1716); 396 (February, 1716/17); 449 (April, 1717); 453 (May, 1717); 460 (June, 1717); 469 (August, 1717); 522 (March, 1718).

[3] Ibid., 469 (August, 1717).

[4] C. Mather, Addresses to Old Men, and Young Men, and Little Children (Boston, 1690), pp. 109-11; Sandford Fleming, Children and Puritanism (New Haven, 1933), p. 127.

[5] C. Mather, The Day, and the Work of the Day (Boston, 1693), pp. 69, 71.

[6] C. Mather, Help for Distressed Parents (Boston, 1695), p. 31.

[7] C. Mather, Eleutheria (London, 1698), p. 109.

These later comments, on the other hand, reflect a more internallized conception of 'completing the Reformation,' under the influence of Continental Pietism. In 1710 Mather refers again to early childhood conversions, but this time among the Pietists.[2] Two years later he speaks of "a most surprising revival of good things amid the world," citing the publication of "a collection of observable things, wherein the Kingdom of God has been more sensibly opening itself in the heart of Germany." He notes also the diminution of the papal authority and "the spirit of persecution, which wherever it is found is the spirit of Antichrist," and the appearance of a great number of solid ministerial candidates.[3] He considers Pietism simply one evidence of a spiritual stirring throughout the Western world, however, including Britain and America; for he finds the hymns of Watts and other recent poets a harbinger of "the time of the Singing of Birds coming on,"[4] and mentions a revival connected with a young man's society at Harvard.[1] In 1714 he commends his own *Biblia Americana* to the public and the publishers with the implication that he is one of those in the vanguard of international Pietism:

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[1] J. S. Simon, John Wesley and the Religious Societies (London, 1921), p. 26.

[2] C. Mather, Man Eating the Food of Angels (Boston, 1710), pp. 63 ff.

[3] C. Mather, Thoughts for the Day of Rain (Boston, 1712), pp. 60-4.

[4] C. Mather, The Wayes and Joyes of Early Piety (Boston, 1712), Appendix.

> An Age of *Light* comes on; *Explications* and *Discoveries* are continually growing, which all that will but *shew themselves Men* cannot but imbibe with Satisfaction. The *Path of the Just One*, in his gracious Approaches towards us, causes the *Light* which opens His Oracles unto us, to *shine more and more towards the perfect Day* . . . The Instruments by whom this *Light* is brought down unto us, have of late been greatly Multiplied: *God has given His Word* for it, and *Great has been the Army of those that have published it*.[2]

But he points to Halle as the most eminent example of spiritual awakening in recent experience, citing with particular interest the social impact of Francke's work in the orphanage, the schools and colleges where "still Piety is the main Concern," the Widow-house and the *Englische Haus*, and the distribution of Bibles and Christian literature.

> Dr. *Franckius* is a Person truly Wonderful for his vast *Erudition*; but much more so for his most shining *Piety*; and yet more so for his most peerless *Industry*; and most of all so, for the Astonishing *Blessings of God* upon his Undertakings to advance His Kingdom in the World.
>
> . . . .
>
> That which lies at the bottom of all this Great Man's Designs, is, to advance *True*, *Real*, *Vital Piety*; and such a *Knowledge* of a Glorious Christ, as will bring the Children of Men into the *Service* of their only Saviour, and Such a *Love* of God, and of their Neighbour, as the Gospel calleth for; or in a word, *Right Christianity*, and a Glorious Revival of the Primitive.[3]
>
> The *Blessings* of God our Saviour upon these essays of this Great Man are altogether Astonishing. The Vast Numbers of Souls brought Home to God, and made Instances of *Serious Piety*! -------- The Vast Number of *Instruments* qualifyed here to do good abroad in the World! More than all *Europe* will soon feel, yea, has already felt, the precious Effects of the *Franckian* Education . . .' There the Printing-Presses

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[1] C. Mather, *Golgotha* (Boston, 1713), p. 46.

[2] C. Mather, *A New Offer* (Boston, 1714), pp. 2, 3. Mather's hopes for the "age of Light' are an interesting counterpoint to the expectations of the *philosophes*.

[3] C. Mather, *Nuncia Bona e Terra Longinqua* (Boston, 1715), p. 2.

> have brought forth Books, which have had an Incredible Efficacy for the Producing of Piety, even in far distant Countrys . . . But what appears to me very particularly entertaining, is, the Uncommon and Successful Care taken by this Man of God, for dispersing the Book of God, & procuring the Waters of Life to run into all Parts of the Earth.[1]
>
> The truly Amiable Boehm Writes . . . "Here is one of the greatest Transactions at this Day in the World, which if it Proceeds, as it hath hitherto done, will in a very few Years come to have a much greater Influence on the Publick Affairs of the World, than all the Battels, and Sieges, which our Gazetts, Mercuries, and Registers have been filled withal.
>
> . . . .
>
> Behold, a Seed of Piety, & of Pure Christianity, which is the Kingdom of God in the true Essence, and Glory of it, Quickened, Expanding in the Bowels of Germany.[2]

Mather continued for several years to nourish his hopes of revival on the progress of "that Piety, of which the incomparable Franckius and his Colleagues, have been such noble propagators."[3] In his last public utterance on the imminent revival, however, an account in 1718 of the conversion of three Jewish children in Berlin, he seems to detect an ebb and flow in the movement toward revival. He quotes an anonymous German author on the situation of world Christianity:

> "The various Motions observed in several parts of Europe, tending to a Revival of Sound and Substantial Piety, do presage the Approach of Better Times, and a fuller Measure of the Divine Spirit promised to the Latter Days. But then the Intervening Night of the Judgment of GOD, provoked by a long and continued Course of Sinning, will perhaps destroy again the Flowers, which appear up and down the Earth."[4]

The public and private statements of Mather in the twenties reflect this same cautious, and somewhat disheartened, evaluation of the spiritual situation. This was the period of extreme darkness before the dawn, both in England and America, from the evangelical point of view.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 7-8.

[2] Ibid., p. 11.

[3] C. Mather, Utilia (Boston, 1716), Author's Preface; cf. Menachem (Boston, 1716), p. 39.

[4] C. Mather, Faith Encouraged (Boston, 1718), p. 14.

4. Ecumenism and World Mission

There is no area in which Mather approaches greatness so nearly, and offers so assurate a lead toward the future, as in his ecumenism. But here again he was no innovator, for this has a double rootage in Pietist and Puritan sources. It is disconcerting for the modern churchman, braced against the 'divisive' polemic stance of twentieth-century Revivalism, to run up against the fact that the founders of the revivalist tradition were the first ecumenists after the period of the Reformers; but then the fact may be equally unsettling to the modern Revivalist.

A. Ecumenism in the Puritan/Pietist Tradition

The "einheitliche Tendenz des Pietismus" which Ritschl noted[1] was necessarily rather carefully disguised in the writings of Arndt, who was under constant pressure from orthodoxy because of Reformed and mystical strands visible in his thinking. His friend Andreae made his utopian city recognizably Lutheran, but cautiously spoke up against factions over small points, advancing the theory that Christ prefers ignorant saints to contentious scholars, if learning and piety cannot be combined in one group of leaders.[2] Andreae and J. A. Comenius cooperated in stressing church unity and a number of other goals which would assume importance in later Pietism: educational reform, improved Bible study, practical piety, and scientific research.[1] The most typical Lutheran ecumenist of this early period was undoubtedly Georg Calixtus;[2] but stemming from Arndt, there were a number of ecumenical pre-Pietists, such as Müller, Quistorp, and Lütkemann, teaching in university centers with liberal Melanchthonian backgrounds, or at Strassburg where there was a Reformed influence.[3] At a later period, Spener was severely restrained by the need to preserve an appearance of Lutheran orthodoxy; but even so his early suspicion of Calvinism yielded (especially after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes and the attendant persecution) to a receptive charity.[4] He early concluded that unconditional freedom of conscience was necessary for the full vigor and extension of true Christianity, and that orthodoxy sins when it attempts to compel belief by force. He came to feel that all Evangelical and Reformed groups holding the Bible as the rule of faith could and should eventually unite regardless of differences over Christology, the Sacraments, and even the problematic doctrine of predestination. Eventually, he arrived at a broad tolerance embracing Arminians, Mennonites, disciples of Jacob Böhme, and even Quakers of the stamp of Robert Barclay.[5]

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[1] Hans Martin Rotermund, Orthodoxie und Pietismus (Berlin, 1959), p. 113.

[2] J. V. Andreae, Christianopolis (New York, 1916), p. 241.

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[1] J. M. Batten, John Dury (Chicago, 1944), p. 17; Martin Schmidt, "Der Ökumenische Zinn des deutschen Pietismus und seine Auswirkungen in der Bibelverbreitung," in Die Bleibende Bedeutung des Pietismus, ed. by Oskar Söhngen (Wittenberg, 1960) p. 60.

[2] F. E. Stoeffler, The Rise of Evangelical Pietism (Leiden, 1965), p. 182.

[3] D. W. Brown, "The Problem of Subjectivism in Pietism" (unpublished doctoral thesis, Northwestern University, 1962), p. 49.

[4] F. F. Walrond, Philipp Jacob Spener (London, 1893), p. 51.

[5] Brown, op. cit., p. 57.

He drew the line at Socinians, however; and though he admitted the presence of regenerate Christians within the Roman church, he held that the papacy is Antichrist, and thus beyond the reach of ecumenical cooperation.[1] Toward the end of his life he was involved in negotiations considering the union of Reformed and Lutheran churches, but he came to feel that organic unity would have to wait on a spiritual revival in both communions, and adopted a strategy of disseminating Pietism in all branches of Christendom as a preparation for eventual structural union.[2]

Spener's basic outlook was adopted and put into action by Francke, producing what Erich Beyreuther calls the greatest ecumenical and missionary network since the sixteenth century, linking Holland, England, America, the Scandinavian countries, South Africa, India, Poland, Russia, the Balkan states, Switzerland, France, and Italy. Part of the dynamic of this outreach was the burgeoning spirit of reform and the awakening consciousness of the possibility of world unity among nations in leaders such as Ernest the Pious.[3] Francke's remarkable linguistic genius, and his acquaintance with world leadership through correspondence and travel, made him the ideal representative of unitive evangelical mission,[4] and his educational involvement in the intellectual *Zeitgeist* of Europe in this period made him particularly open to ecumenism.[1] The attacks of a bitterly anti-Reformed orthodoxy, however,[2] compelled Francke to whisper about his ecumenical goals even while he was boldly proclaiming those of his missionary concern, so that his published writings do not much reflect what Beyreuther calls the "*ökumenische Geheimtheologie*" at Halle.[3] This was openly articulated in situations where it was advantageous, however; A. W. Boehm, in England, publicly hoped for "a Time, when the Church of Christ will come up from the Wilderness of various Sects, Parties, Nations, Languages, Forms, and Ways of Worship, nay of Crosses and Afflictions, leaning upon her Beloved, and in his Power bidding Defiance to all her Enemies."[4]

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[1] Klaus Deppermann, *Der Hallesche Pietismus und der preussische Staat unter Friedrich III* (Göttingen, 1961), pp. 40-44.

[2] A. W. Nagler, *Pietism and Methodism* (Nashville, 1918), p. 41.

[3] Beyreuther comments, "*In Ernst dem Frommen spricht sich die Sehnsucht des Jahrhunderts aus nach Harmonie, nach einer Überwindung aller geistigen Verwüstung, die Konfessionhass und politische Verwilderung verursacht haben.*" "*Das grosse Projekt einer lutherischen Gelehrtenrepublik, der Gedanke an einem neuen geistigen Mittelpunkt bewegt auch den Gothaer Kreis. Der Plan einer Brüderschaft, eines universalen Gelehrtenkollegiums zur Durchfuhrung einer Generalreformation der Kirche und der Welt liegt irgendwie in der Luft.*" Vide Beyreuther, *August Hermann Francke und die Anfange der Ökumenischen Bewegung* (Hamburg-Bergstedt, 1957), pp. viii-ix, 27-8.

[4] Beyreuther, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

Mather did not need to import his ecumenism from the Continent, however; he was himself part of a long tradition of unitive thought in English and American Puritanism. While we are accustomed to thinking of Puritanism as a disintegrative force, considering the fragmentation of sects during the Commonwealth period, it remains true that it was only those rationalistic strands in the Puritan movement which insisted on rigid structural or theological orthodoxy -- or, at the opposite pole, those which opened their minds to the irrational and anti-structural forces of of enthusiasm -- which were responsible for the divisive thrust among Puritans. Irvonwy Morgan contends that Cartwright and Travers were part of a dissident minority whose extreme concern for structural purity was unrepresentative of the moderation of most early Puritans,[1] and certainly the evidence indicates that the main leaders of early Puritanism were moderate proponents of interior godliness who were simply pressing for freedom on conscience with respect to a few ceremonies. Perkins, for example, felt that the errors in the established church were such as weakened but did not destroy it, and abhorred the practice of defining Christians by party, as 'Lutherans' or 'Calvinists.'. Such other early Puritans as Sibbes, Adams, and Bolton were comparatively moderate.[2] But particularly significant is the open reception which later English Puritans gave in the 1630's to John Dury, the pioneer ecumenist who is an earlier incarnation of the ecumenical Pietism represented by Francke, Boehm, and Mather almost a century later. Strongly influenced by Comenius' ideal of a pan-Christian union through the educational reform of culture, and persuaded that the promotion of practical piety was the key to the accomplishment of this goal, the Scotsman held that Christian unity was necessary both for Protestant survival in the face of hostile Catholic powers, and for effective mission in the unchristianized sectors of the world. He was supported in some measure, in his activities in England, both by Anglicans such as Usher, Gouge, Downame, Davenant, and Hall; and by such Puritans as Sibbes, John Cotton, Owen, Thomas Goodwin, Nye, Greenhill, Byfield, and John Goodwin. The degree to which Dury's program had captured the Puritan imagination is revealed by the fact that one of the charges brought by Parliament against Laud in 1643/4 was his indifference to Dury's efforts. Dury's only initial opposition, in fact, seems to have come from very high-church Anglicans such as Laud, and from Lutheran orthodoxy; although he was later suspected of an excessive latitudinarianism, as tensions rose between competing parties, and his impartial friendship with all of these became an embarrassment. His four-point program, offered in 1650, is amazingly prophetic of the concerns of Spener, Francke, and Mather. He proposed that the ministers work with the magistrates to find how "the Knowledge, Practice, and Power of Godlinesse may be most effectually advanced throughout the nation, either by an impartiall settlement and regulating of Catecheticall Exercises, or Propheticall Conferences, and of a preaching ministery," the suppression of scandals and disorders, the healing of breaches between parties of Christians, and the establishment of effective Christian schools. As in Mather's case, his concern for ecumenical spiritual awakening was driven by millenial expectations, and by a missionary concern including the conversion of the Jews.[1]

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[1] Cf. *ibid*., pp. 55-6: "*Francke ist ein typischer Barockmensch* .... *Der Barock hat eine eigentumliche Vorliebe für umfassende Pläne* . . . *Die ganze Sehnsucht der Zeit greift nach himmelstürmenden Zielen* . . . *Das Unendliche, das Grenzenlöse fasziniert den barocken Menschen*."

[2] Hans Martin Rotermund, *Orthodoxie und Pietismus* (Berlin, 1959), p. 22.

[3] Beyreuther, *op. cit*., p. 82.

[4] A. W. Boehm, in Johann Arndt's *Of True Christianity*, tr. by Boehm (2nd Eng. ed., London, 1720), p. xiv.

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[1] I. Morgan, The Godly Preachers of the Elizabethan Church (London, 1965), pp. 186-9, 210.

[2] C. H. and K. George, The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation (Princeton, 1961), pp. 376-8, 414-16; cf. Stoeffler, op. cit., p. 49.

As the divisions and conflicts of the Commonwealth Period gradually demonstrated to the English Puritans the necessity of some kind of cooperative unity between Christians, proposals akin to those of Dury were taken up by men of more established reputation in the English churches. While there were advocates of unity in all parties, notably in the growing latitudinarian stream within the established church -- Jeremy Taylor's Liberty of Prophesying had appeared in 1647[2] -- here again the central core of those receptive to ecumenical thought was among the Puritans, the moderate episcopal nonconformists. Plum comments that

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[1] Batten, op. cit., pp. 16, 18, 26, 32, 45, 51-2, 57, 67, 110-11, 121, 128-9, 139-40, 197-8.

[2] Anglicanism, ed. by P. E. More and F. L. Cross (London, 1957), p. 187.

> . . . If Puritanism has any meaning in the evolution of the nation's history, that meaning results from the solid character, the persistence and action of the moderate element in church and sect . . . It is both interesting and important that in the field of religion the Puritans tended, in the great majority of cases, to the liberal rather than the radical viewpoint . . . Unfortunately, the trials of the civil war emphasized and strengthened the radical element.[1]
>
> The effort to force Nonconformity had been a complete failure. The three years had purged much of the dross from the Puritan character, had deepened its spiritual nature and emphasized its unselfishness. Moreover, the brief period had made it clear to the Presbyterian element that there was little chance for comprehension and thus had emphasized for them the need of toleration . . . From this time there is a rapidly growing number of pamphlets urging the need of toleration -- pamphlets from the pens of Presbyterians and Low-Churchmen as well as from those who had long espoused the cause of liberty in religion.[2]

The most famous English ecumenist of the late seventeenth century, Richard Baxter, influenced by Dury and by fellow churchmen like Davenant and Ussher, sought after 1652 to urge the goal of a loose ecclesiastical comprehension rather than mere toleration.[3] His pioneering espousal of an organic church unification, which would seek to fuse into one structure diverse elements of polity and worship, was based on a concern for the effectiveness of the church's spiritual mission; for as he said to Owen and the Congregationalists, "PARISH REFORMATION TENDETH TO THE MAKING GODLINESS UNIVERSAL, and . . . your SEPARATION tendeth to dwindle it to nothing."[4] He considered such unity equally necessary to evangelism and foreign missions.[1] Baxter's passionate concern for structural church unity and hatred of schism, together with his practice of 'occasional conformity' and his piercing critical vision into the imbalances of Nonconformists, was intensely irritating to English Congregationalists.[2] But by the 70's comprehension had become a dead issue and toleration was the only serious possibility, and Baxter was accepted by men of all parties for his godliness and passion as an ecumentical pioneer.[3] A pamphlet of this period notes that "there is not one party in England that holds it as a principle of their religion that it is lawful to persecute for mere religion."[4] The unsuccessful attempt at organic union between English Congregationalists and Presbyterians, who joined together in 1690 as "United Brethren," but began a lingering dissolution in 1693 over unresolved issues of polity and supposed antinomianism, confirmed the majority opinion that toleration was the best that could be managed before the churches were more awakened spiritually. But it did not dampen the general ecumenical enthusiasm of the 90's, which was spurred on by the cooperation of the reforming societies.[5] With the close interaction between Halle and London after the founding of the S. P. C. K. in 1699 -- through correspondence, travellers, the immigration of German refugees, student in-

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[1] H. G. Plum, Restoration Puritanism (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1943), pp. 10-11.

[2] Ibid., p. 31.

[3] Hugh Martin, Puritanism and Richard Baxter (London, 1954), p. 159. Baxter corresponded with Dury, and his Association Plan was identical with one earlier proposed by the Scotsman (Batten, op. cit., p. 174; cf. G. F. Nuttall, Richard Baxter and Philip Doddridge London, 1951 , pp. 6, 19.

[4] Quoted by A. H. Wood, Church Unity without Uniformity (London, 1963), p. 243.

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[1] Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 68-71; Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 242; G. F. Nuttall, *Richard Baxter and Philip Doddridge* (London, 1951), pp. 1-2.

[3] Plum, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

[4] *Ibid.*,

[5] C. Bridenbaugh, *Mitre and Sceptre*: (New York, 1962), pp. 32-5; cf. L. Trinterud, *The Forming of an American Tradition* (Philadelphia, 1949), pp. 20-1; R. Tudor Jones, *Congregationalism in England*, 1662-1962 (London, 1962), pp. 114-19; D. W. R. Bahlman, *The Moral Revolution of 1688* (New Haven, 1957), p. 80.

interchanges, the English translations of Francke's Pietas Hallensis,[1] and the ambassadorial work of Boehm -- ecumenism reached its peak in England after the turn of the century, and its vigor persisted until a new generation of leaders of cooler Enlightenment temperament appeared on the scene.[2]

B. The Limits of Mather's Ecumenism

The New England Puritans had lagged somewhat behind their English brethren in the growth of toleration and ecumenism, as we have seen. The first generation had been unable to stomach Roger Williams' blend of fanaticism and sophisticated theological understanding of the theocratic problem, and John Cotton had been unwilling to relinquish carnal weapons as a support for the gospel.[3] The founding fathers settled into an uneasy (and of course unacceptable) gentlemen's agreement to tolerate heresy if it were unproselyted;[4] and at a time when the English Puritans were beginning to extol the virtues of toleration, they were reacting with the surprised insistence that the maintenance of religious purity by the exercise of theocratic force was a part of their "errand into the wilderness."[5] Cotton Mather mentions a favorable response from a synod of forty ministers, in response to a letter from "the famous John Dury," in 1663, by the pen of John Norton in the last year of his life, and a similar response to Dury from John Davenport.[1] American Puritanism went through an uncomfortable battle between its growing ecumenical conscience and the logic of its theocratic presuppositions, but the more flexible minds of the second generation and the rising genius of the third were forced by the logic of events into a consistent ecumenism. Writing in 1724, Cotton Mather indicates that his father began to change his mind in the 1680's, on the duty of the magistrate to punish heresy, and came to conlude that the tares (other than blasphemers and atheists) must be tolerated because the sacrifices of a forced conscience are an abomination to God. "He saw, that until Persecution be utterly Banished out of the World, and Cain's Club taken out of Abel's Hand, tis Impossible to rescue the World from Endless Confusions."[2] There was of necessity a shift in Increase' understanding of the biblical picture of the treatment of heresy; Cotton says he supported his change of views by the facts that there was no compulsion of sojourners in Israel to worship in the Israelitish manner, that ordinarily even heretics within Israel were not molested by the magistracy, and that New Testament weapons against heresy are not carnal.[3] Cotton Mather put himself firmly on record in favor of toleration in his earliest published sermons,[1] and in 1692 he remarked,

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[1] London, 1706; 2nd ed., 1709.

[2] Martin Schmidt, "Der Ökumenische Zinn des deutschen Pietismus und seine Auswirkungen in der Bibelverbreitung," in Die Bleibende Bedeutung des Pietismus, ed. by Oskar Söhngen (Wittenberg, 1960), p. 60; E. Beyreuther, August Hermann Francke und die Anfange der Ökumenischen Bewegung (Hamburg-Bergstedt, 1957), pp. 111, 129, 134, 151, 159, 184.

[3] L. Ziff, The Career of John Cotton (Princeton, 1962), pp. 89, 215-16.

[4] E. Battis, Saints and Sectaries (Williamsburg, 1962), p. 157.

[5] Cf. P. Miller, Errand into the Wilderness (New York, 1956).

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[1] C. Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana, I (Hartford, 1855), 299-301, 326-7.

[2] C. Mather, Parentator (Boston, 1724), p. 60.

[3] Perry Miller refuses to believe this account, and conjectures that the shift occurred in 1690 for political reasons, since Increase could not take advantage of the Act of Toleration, to salvage liberty for New England's churches, without somehow inventing a rationale to swallow toleration itself (The New England Mind: From Colony to Province Cambridge, Mass., 1953 , p. 165). Considering Increase' close connection with English Puritans and moderates like Baxter during the 70's and 80's, however, it is more likely that the Cotton gives an accurate representation of the evolution of his father's views and his own.

> I ran the Hazard of much Reproch by testifying . . . against the Persecution of erroneous and conscientious Dissenters, by the civil Magistrate. I feared, that the Zeal of my Countrey had formerly had in it more Fire than should have been; especially, when the mad Quakers were sent unto the Gallowes, that should have been kept rather in a Bedlam . . . I think, I am the only Minister Living in the Land, that have testifyed against the Suppression of Haeresy, by Persecution. And I hope, the Lord will own mee with a more singular Success, in the Suppression of Haeresy by Endeavours more spiritual and evangelical.[2]

Reinforced by current English thought and later by Pietism, Mather continued to reiterate this position boldly, though he was apparently considerably in the vanguard of the conservative leadership of the colony.[3] Occasionally he uses his attacks on persecution as levers against the impositions of the Church of England,[4] and he can defend a reformed New England as if it had never acted in the role of persecutor.[5] But there is no doubt whatsoever that Mather is thoroughly -- and theologically -- convinced of the necessity of tolerating heretics. He seems to have absorbed Roger

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[1] C. Mather, The Serviceable Man (Boston, 1690), pp. 34-5; Optanda (Boston, 1692), p. 43.

[2] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 149 (May, 1692).

[3] Cf. C. Mather, Observanda (Boston, 1695), p. 44; Magnalia Christi Americana, I (Hartford, 1855), pp. 35, 62, 113, 250, 259, 298, 327, 499; II (Hartford, 1855), 536; Theopolis Americana (Boston, 1710), p. 29; A Town in its Truest Glory (Boston, 1712), p. 53; Thoughts for the Day of Rain (Boston, 1712), p. 62; Things to be More Thought Upon (Boston, 1713), p. 61; Utilia (Boston, 1716), p. 229; Piety and Equity (Boston, 1717), p. 27; Malachi (Boston, 1717), p. 68; Three Letters from New England (London, 1721), p. 24; Ratio Disciplinae (Boston, 1726), p. 172.

[4] C. Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana, I (Hartford, 1855), pp. 35, 250, 327; Piety and Equity (Boston, 1717), p. 27.

[5] C. Mather, Ratio Disciplinae (Boston, 1726), p. 172.

Williams' biblical critique of the New England position, for he acknowledges that while heresies were indeed to be punished in the Old Testament theocracy, it was "because they were high Treason against the King of the Theocracy. The Christian Religion brings us not into a Temporal Canaan. It knows no Designs, it has no Weapons, but what are purely Spiritual."[1] Therefore the Civil Magistrate usurps the throne of God himself when he pretends to punish any offenses which do not directly break the peace of "humane society," and the sword is not to compel the observation of the first table of the Law, for "all the Sacrifices of men unto God, not proceeding from a Conscience that He does command them . . . All Acts of Religion produced merely by external Violence, are detestable things."[2]

It is true, however, that his theory of toleration operated within quite narrow limits, judged from our perspective. There were two forms of religion which the Mathers could not allow to be openly expressed within a Christian society: atheism and Roman Catholicism. In this they were simply in harmony with the most liberal insight of their time, for the most advanced Protestant ecumenism of this period still ruled out Rome.[3] Mather's own bitter distrust of the Roman church was determined by a strong combination of political fear and theological prejudice.

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[1] C. Mather, Malachi (Boston, 1717), p. 71.

[2] Ibid., p. 74.

[3] The Puritan founding theologians had been willing to admit the presence of regenerate believers within the Roman system, but felt that since Trent the papacy itself was more than ever clearly identifiable with the Antichrist, and not to be tolerated (George, op. cit., pp. 379-89). Even Baxter agreed to this, and the political situation in England in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries made a hard line against Rome seem a life and death necessity to English Protestants (Martin, op. cit., p. 120). The attitude of Spener and Francke toward Rome was precisely in line with the typical Puritan view, admitting the presence of believers within the church but considering toleration of such a dangerous political entity as the Roman system unwise (Nagler, op. cit., p. 41).

> The Church of *Rome*, with the *Man of Sin* at the Head of it, entirely entirely possessed by *Satan*, is resolved upon the Extermination of all the Christians upon Earth, who come not into a Combination with her, in her *Detestable Idolatries*. For the Accomplishment of this Extermination, the Idolaters reckon all the Methods of *Treachery* and *Cruelty*, that can be invented among the Children of Men, to be *Allowable*, and even to be *Sanctified*.[1]

With a peculiar logical sleight of hand, Mather even manages to blame Rome for Protestant disunity:

> All true *Protestants* are Agreed, That it is a *Duty* to depart from the Church of *Rome*: And the DIVISIONS among *Protestants* proceed from the Weakness of many, who are not Agreed, about the *Degree* of Departure from that *Apostate Church*. Our *Divisions* are therefore to be counted but, *Remainders of the Church of Rome with us*; and are to be charged upon the *Roman Church*, and not upon the *Reformed*. And there are as Grievous *Divisions* in the Communion of the Church of *Rome*, as there are among us; whereof the *Dominicans* & *Franciscans*, the *Jansenists* & *Jesuites*, are notorious Instances.[2]

He is of course not blind to the presence of Christians within Rome, nor does he glamorize the current Protestant decay:

> The *Church of Rome* is an Example, of a *Golden Candlestick* Eternally Damn'd in *Haeresies*. And yet it is a thing to be spoken with Regret and Horrour, There are Hundreds of Thousands this day in the *Church of Rome*, who had the main Articles of the *Protestant Religion* (the Jansenists, I mean) better than multitudes of pretended *Protestants*, who are fallen into the *Haeretical Idolatries* of *Pelagianism*.[3]

The virulence of statements like these, and the unrelievedly dark picture of Rome given in the rest of Mather's work, can only be excused and understood as we reflect on his memory of 1685 and his observation of the continuing plight of Protestants in France. Mather could pray with deep concern for "the replacement of the Candlestick" of the Greek churches, despite their share in many of the decadent features of Rome, partly because of the occasional interest of the Greeks themselves in union with Protestantism,[1] but principally because the Greek churches did not share in what Mather considered a permanent mark of the Antichrist, the corporal persecution of true believers. It would seem that if a Puritan could hope for revival and reformation according to his standards in the Eastern church, he could this also for Rome; but Mather was prevented from this consideration by the structure of his eschatology, which required that Rome remain a permanent villain in the drama of history.

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[1] C. Mather, *Suspiria Vinctorum* (Boston, 1726), p. 3.

[2] C. Mather, *The Fall of Babylon* (Boston, 1707), p. 19.

[3] C. Mather, *American Tears upon the Ruins of the Greek Churches* (Boston, 1701), p. 50.

There were other forms of religious expression which Mather was prepared to tolerate, but never to embrace ecumenically. We have already examined his response to Enlightenment rationalism, and noted that he detected a linkage between this and another movement which he considered equally unbiblical, Quakerism. In his early pastoral letter to the New England churches warning against the Quaker missionary, George Keith, he attacks the Friends' religion as a "great Choakweed of the Christian and Protestant Religion":

> I have seriously _Turned unto that Light_, and with best of my _light_ as yet, I can see many damnable Haeresies in Quakerism; if I have . . . one spark of _Light_ in me, _Quakerism_ is but a profound and a deadly _Pit of darkness_.
>
> . . . .
>
> There is hardly any one Fundamental Article of that Reformed Religion, whereby we look to be saved, that is not undermined by _Quakerism_, whatever professions it makes unto the contrary.[2]

Nevertheless, Mather declares himself in 1691 to be utterly against crippling the Quakers with punishments, and also open to reason about their doctrines; and hopeful for their recovery:

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[1] _Ibid._, p. 43.

[2] C. Mather, _Little Flocks Guarded Against Grievous Wolves_ (Boston, 1691), pp. 3-4.

> 'Tis here granted, That about thirty years ago, The Quakers did not distinctly discern the voice of the Lord; so that I am not altogether in Despair, that they may now better discern it, and by degrees return to him that is the Shepherd and Bishop of Souls, by leaving all their Errors, as well as the Tremblings which first accompany'd them.[1]

> I desire the Quakers may be treated with all Christian offices, and with much Benignity. I abhor the Persecution which has been sometimes upon them. Yet, Oh! Pity, Pity their Idolatry, while they Deify such a Sinful Creature. And, my Friends, Let none of you be entangled in it.[2]

Mather is rather more severe with rationalist heresy.

> In very many Disputed Points of Religion, they who pull the Saw may by and by shake hands with one another, as Brethren in Christ; because the Piety which they both mean to support by their several different Positions is one and the same. Yea, even the Calvinists and the Lutherans may on this Account go on together, not falling out by the Way, for they are Brethren. Whereas the Arian and the Gentilist, obtruding upon us another Christ, than He who is our Life, this kills our Piety at once. Our greatest acts of Piety, must be to him, no other than so many Flaming Impieties; and anon, when he's got you well under, he'll tell you so! He brings in another Gospel. And what censure would an apostle Paul, writing to his Galatians, have passed on such an one? I don't find, that he would have said, Hold Communion with him. No, that is not the English of the Word, Anathema![3]

C. The Scope of Mather's Ecumenism

It may at this point seem obscure to the reader why Mather should have been in any danger of being mistaken for a latitudinarian. But even in the 90's, the Mather's were moving beyond most of their New England colleagues in beginning to urge the organizational union of churches holding the Reformed faith. While Increase Mather was in England helping to negotiate the merger of the United Brethren, Cotton Mather's Blessed Unions (1692) placed a benediction on the English venture, and urged that New England had come to the point of being equally open to the godly conversation of Presbyterian, Congregational, "and EPISCOPAL too when Piety is otherwise visible . . . and I may add, the Name of, ANTIPEDOBAPTIST."[1] Perry Miller's contention that the Mathers' ecumenism was at this point only a cover for a plan to consolidate the dissenters to preserve the Puritan establishment in New England is effectively refuted by this document.[2] *Blessed Unions* is too enthusiastically ecumenical to be merely part of a political scheme. It states the case for ecumenism in a spark-shower of epigrams:

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[1] Ibid., p. 10.

[2] C. Mather, A Town in its Truest Glory (Boston, 1712), p. 53.

[3] C. Mather, Three Letters from New England (London, 1721), p. 12.

> Strife, 'tis a Sin that stirs up all other sorts of Distempers and Corruptions in us; the *Lusts* in our Souls, like so many chill'd *Snakes*, do horribly Crawl, and Hiss, and Sting, when this *Fire* has Envigorated 'em. The *Devil* has a Lodging, where men do not Ring a *Curfew Bell*. We are as *Bottles*; if we take and shake one another, a world of *dirty Stuff* will be Praised from the Bottom in us.[3]
>
> We must first, *Forbear to Impose* one upon another. It is impossible for any but, *God who forms the Spirit of man within him*, to *form* the understandings of men, into a Beleef of every *Christian Doctrine*. If we shall Violently and Forceably *Compell* all about us, to take in our *Schemes*, we shall be as Inhumane as that *Giant*, who cut or stretch'd all his Lodgers, to the Exact Length of the *Bed*, he had provided for them . . . Shall we bicker about *Black* and *White*, until God make us meet in *Red*? . . . We should make the airest consturctions of all Actions, and Lovingly take everything by the Best Handle. We should, if we knock with *Hard Reasons*, yet stroke them with *Soft Answers*; and let them find us of the *Tribe* which, *Give Godly Words*. A *Samaritan* sort of crabbedness, churlishness, frowardness, towards all that are not in every thing just jumping with us . . . Tis not the Spirit of the Gospel . . . We must beware how we *Monopolize* all Godliness to our own *Little Party* . . . where-ever we can see, *Aliquid Christi*, any thing of Christ, let it be dear to us.
>
> . . . .
>
> Be Affected with *Mortality*. They say, *Dust* thrown on Fighting Bees, will presently make 'em give over the Fight. If we are prone to Sting one another, Let us cast a little of our *Grave-Dust*, upon us by our Devout, Gracious, antedating Meditations . . . Especially, when it comes to stabbing of one another with *Pens*, Let us remember our *Sand* runs faster than our *Ink*, and we are as Brittle as the *Glasses* which we now use instead of Inkhorns. How near are we to that State, *Ubi Luthero cum Zwinglio optime jan Convenit*? A *Luther*

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[1] C. Mather, *Blessed Unions* (Boston, 1692), Dedication.

[2] P. Miller, *The New England Mind, From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), p. 217.

[3] C. Mather, *Blessed Unions* (Boston, 1692), pp. 52-311.

> and a Zwinglius will be less eager one against another, if they think How soon they are to meet! . . . If every Sheaf must always bow to Yours and Mind, when shall we be quiet?
>
> . . . .
>
> If we can't have but One Mouth, yet let us have but One Heart.[1]

The main body of the sermon asserts the basis of unity in the common engrafting of regenerate Christians in Christ, but hesitates to offer doctrinal or other bases of organic union, pressing instead a general union in goals and mutual love. It warns against compromising the purity of the church to obtain unity, but insists on the evils of schism and persecution, and the importance of peace. On the other hand, Mather does clearly indicate that a visible union of existing Christian organizations is the final goal of ecumenism: "Our Lord here says, That they all may be ONE . . . It is not enough that we have Invisible Union with all the Saints of God; but we must have a visible Union, too, or such an one as our Context mentions, That the World may Believe, at the Contemplation and Invitation of it."[2] Mather's horizon at this point does not extend beyond the limits of ecumenical Puritanism. He wants to repair the breaches torn in the church by English history, but he does not yet hope for a mending of those made by the Reformation.

The emphases in this early document are very Baxterian. One very notable tone which Mather continued to sound until the end of his life, and which was also an obsession with Baxter, was the harmfulness of controversy and contention. In another work of this year he urges Dury's argument that dissension in Protestant circles has encouraged and aided Rome.[3] A few years later he reflects uneasily about the Hutchinson conflict, when "a Factious Distinction made between, *Men under a Covenant of Works*, and *Men under a Covenant of Grace*, as it were by some *Enchantment*, insinuated it self into all our Concernments, to the producing of *Works* wherein there was little enough of *Grace* discovered."[1] To the end of his life Mather felt that one of the most serious spiritual problems within Puritanism was its tendency toward schism and faction.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 72-81.

[2] Ibid., p. 41.

[3] C. Mather, A Midnight Cry (Boston, 1692), p. 7.

> 'Tis astonishing to think, how much the success of the Gospel is hindered, when a Spirit of Contention is got among a People. Satan knows what he does, when he throws in Bolts of Contention among a People, which embroil them and enrage them . . . The house of *God* becomes as a House haunted with Evil Spirits . . . Indeed, our *Savior* once appeared in a Thorn-Bush. But, When a Church once becomes a Thorn-Bush, embarassed with contention, our *Lord Jesus Christ* will grant little appearance of himself.[2]

In later sermons he presses this point with a sharp wit and discernment. Speaking of party spirit, he says,

> Tis by this project of the Devil, that Christianity is almost ruined in the world. Men are not concerned about the *Essentials*, the *Substantials*, the *Vitals* of Christianity; Why? Because the *Strength* of their Spirits is all spent in the Concerns of some *little Party*.
>
> . . . .
>
> To what purpose is it, for a man to be a Protestant, if he don't cast off the *Devil*, as well as the *Pope*? To what purpose is it, for a man to deny a *Freewill to Spiritual Good in the Unregenerate*, if the man remain himself *Unregenerate*? . . . What signifies it, whether a man be for the *Congregational* Church-discipline, or for the *Presbyterian*, if a man have not a Soul under the *Heavenly-discipline*?[3]

Mather offers some illuminating insights into the psychology of schism:

> The Zeal of many is but a meer Composition with Conscience, for some Favour unto some detestable Ungodliness. Hence tis, that the most odious and hideous Monsters in Wickedness, have been the fiercest Zealots, and the most Fiery Bigots for, The *CHURCH*. A Man does not *keep his heart with all Diligence*; does not *Walk in the Fear of God* continually; does not subdue his Natural and Culpable Inclinations; does not carry on a constant warfare, in

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[1] C. Mather, *The Short History of New England* (Boston, 1694), p. 13.

[2] C. Mather, *Agricola* (Boston, 1727), p. 66.

[3] C. Mather, *The Armour of Christianity* (Boston, 1704), pp. 168-70.

> Resisting of Daily Temptations; does not lead a Life of Communion with Heaven; does not Love his Neighbor, and seek his Wellbeing, and rejoyce in it. And now he compounds with his Conscience, to make a mighty Noise about something or other, that is not Essential to Christianity. Oh! the Deceits, the Deceits, of Wretched Hypocrisy![1]

A second emphasis common to Baxter and Mather throughout the latter's lifetime was the relative unimportance of nonfundamentals in doctrine and ceremony. In Blessed Unions (1692) Mather aludes to a favorite statement of Baxter's and later ecumenists: "It is a rule as Good as Old, in Necessariis Unitas, in Adiaphoris Libertas, in Utrisque Charitas."[2] It is evident that from the outset of his ecumenical thinking he conceived of the future of Protestant churches in terms of a loosely tolerant plan of evangelical comprehension similar to Baxter's.

> In the Primitive Church, the Christians who were agreed in the Essential and Substantial points of our Holy Religion, yet had their different Perswasions about some Circumstantial Matters. To Comprimise these Differences, the Apostles did not see cause to Exert any Apostolical Authority, that they might Exact a rigid and perfect Uniformity . . . Nay, the HOLY SPIRIT of our SAVIOUR Himself did not see cause presently to put a period unto these Differences. He saw these Differences, to afford an Opportunity for the Exercise of His Graces in the Hearts of His People. He would have the Union among His People to lie in the Unity of the Spirit; and that work of His upon their Souls that lies in Fearing of GOD, and Working of Righteousness. The Foundation of their Union, He would have to be in those Holy Mountains; the MAXIMS of the EVERLASTING GOSPEL, wherein All Good Men are United . . . Differences must continue; But where PIETY has United People, they should pay Brotherly Regards to One another, notwithstanding their Differences.[3]

Mather comments elsewhere, "We may with more reason be angry that two persons do not look alike, than that they do not at all think just alike."[4]

It becomes clearer and clearer, as Mather deals with the subject of unity, that its central *sine qua non* is, as with Comenius, Dury, Baxter, and the Pietists, the presence of true godliness shared by groups of Christians. As early as 1702 Mather is reflecting an analysis of schism and union which sounds as if it is derived directly from Spener's dissection of dead orthodoxy:

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[1] C. Mather, The Tryed Professor (Boston, 1719), p. 43.

[2] C. Mather, Blessed Unions (Boston, 1692), p. 43.

[3] C. Mather, Genuine Christianity (Boston, 1721), p. 1-2.

[4] C. Mather, A Vindication of the Ministers (Boston, 1722), p. 14.

> There are some of a *Sectarian Spirit*, that will be *Zealous* for the particular and peculiar *Opinion* of their own *Parties* in *Christianity*; but they *omit the weightier matters in Christianity*: It will be no matter with them, whether they be in *the Fear of the Lord all the Day long*, and whether they *wash their Hearts* from all wicked Lusts, and whether they *keep their Tongues* from Evil, or, whether they *walk as the Lord* Jesus Christ *walked*, or no. By this *Device of Satan* it is that *Christianity* is almost Ruined in the world; Men are not concerned about the *Vitals* of Christianity; but only about some *Notions* in it. Men are not *Christians*, because the chief of their *Christianity* lies, not in the *Imitation* of *Christ*, but in being such or such a sort of *Christians* . . . Christianity turns upon higher points, than meer *Niceties* of Opinion.[1]

The solvent for these carnal differences can be none other than piety, or in its Puritan incarnation, 'holiness', which, as Mather commented in 1695, "lies not principally in *Parties*, in *Garments*, or in the Rites of a Superstitious *Pharisee*. No, but for a Man to be *filled with all the fulness of God*, for a Man to have God *possessing* of him, to have God *influencing* of him; this is true *Holiness*."[2] By the middle years of the decade between 1710-20, when he was under the strongest direct influence of European Pietism, Mather's ecumenical vision had widened to embrace men on the Continent in whom he found the seriousness of Puritan godliness operative under another name. Now he flatly states that evangelical piety is the universal adhesive force for the building of a united church:

> Among the diverse Colonies of *Bees*, fierce Wars are sometimes carried on, in which they neither give, nor take any Quarter, but make a very

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[1] C. Mather, *Christianity to the Life* (Boston, 1702), p. 15.

[2] C. Mather, *Batteries upon the Kingdom of the Devil* (London, 1695), p. 185.

> great Slaughter of one another. Of these Opposing Armies, the Voice is the same; the *Aspect* is the same; the *Armour* is the same; 'Tis only by their *Scent*, that they distinguish themselves from one another. Wherefore if any one throw among them a *Sweet-scented Liquour*, which may impart the *same Scent* to all the Contenders, presently the *Fight* is over; the *Strife* is at an end; there is a Cessation of all *Hostilities*. Most certainly, the *Maxims of the Everlasting Gospel* exhibit such a *Sweet-scented Liquor*, which being poured, and cast upon the Church-Militant (Alas! too *Militant!*). All the Faithful Servants of God, of whose *Union* the *Blood* of their Saviour is the Eternal *Cement*, will presently be sensible, that they all have the *same Scent* upon them; and they will without any more ado, give over wounding one another. *God put an End unto their doing so!*[1]

Mather thus became increasingly occupied with the question of the creedal 'lowest common denominator' which could serve as the noetic foundation, or the discriminating test, for that genuine piety which was to be at the center of the united church. Earlier ecumenists in the Puritan/Pietist tradition had already considered the matter. In his early years John Dury had projected a new confession of faith derived from the Bible, the ecumenical creeds, and the catechisms, perhaps with the Lutheran *Augustana* as the basis, but with certain issues (such as the three which destroyed the Colloquy of Leipzig) left indefinite.[2] In 1652 he joined with a caucus of Puritan divines to produce a list of fifteeen fundamentals worded so as to exclude Quakers, Unitarians, Anglicans, and Roman Catholics.[3] Richard Baxter was understandably dissatisfied with this, proposing instead a much broader base consisting of the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments. In his four subsequent books on church union he broadened this base to include explicit faith in the Trinity, Jesus Christ as mediator, the divinity of the Holy Spirit, the validity of

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[1] C. Mather, *The Stone Cut Out of the Mountain* (Boston, 1716), p. 6.

[2] Batten, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 129-30.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper as seals of faith, a commitment to godly life, and a general acknowledgement of the authority of scripture. He included a carefully designed list of "True and Easie terms of Unity and Concord" designed to harmonize conforming and dissenting habits of polity and worship.[1] On the Continent, Spener was necessarily guarded in his utterances on this subject, but openly held that there were doctrinal articles of secondary importance as well as a core of faith which was vital to piety. He felt that "Alte Simplizität," apostolic simplicity, could reduce the whole content of faith to a curriculum which might be rehearsed in an hour. Calixtus had reduced the basis of faith to the Apostles' Creed; Spener felt that it was reducible beyond this simply to a confession of sin and of faith in Christ, a kind of anteroom of regenerate Christianity beyond which the convert could be led for advanced doctrinal enlightenment. Beyond this point, the more developed doctrinal corpus was to contain only credenda which were vital for piety and overwhelmingly clear scripturally.[2]

Mather had alluded to the problem of the creedal basis of a united church in Blessed Unions (1692), but had not elaborated. "As far as we can, we should be of the same Opinion, and hold the same Doctrine of Christianity; be sure we must concur in all the Fundamental Ones, or else we cut off ourselves from the Communion of Saints; and as he that had the Plague in his head, we are shut out from the Camp and Church of God."[3] He did not develop this any further his contact with Pietism went into its most active stage after 1710, probably because he was satisfied that the

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[1] Martin, op. cit., p. 165; I. Morgan, The Nonconformity of Richard Baxter (London, 1946), pp. 206-7.

[2] D. W. Brown, "The Problem of Subjectivism in Pietism" (unpublished doctoral thesis, Northwestern University, 1962), pp. 182-4.

[3] C. Mather, Blessed Unions (Boston, 1692), p. 42.

English Heads of Agreement were adequate as a basis for the union of the Reformed and Puritan type of Protestant. When he became fully aware of the awakening among Lutherans, however, he became interested in finding a doctrinal base which would go beyond the Puritan sphere to encompass others whom he now recognized as very vital believers. Early in the year 1713 Mather records a new concern to arrive at a theological base for ecumenical unity.

> Tis hardly possible for me to do a greater Service than to publish unto the World, the Maxims, which are to unite the People that the glorious God will form for Himself, and that will quickly be the Stone growing into a great Mountain, which the whole Earth shall be filled withal. There is a mighty Tendency to Reformation, which has been long working in the Minds of Multitudes and Millions of People, both among the Romanists and Protestants. The Efforts made by this Inclination in the Souls of Men, have hitherto, thro' the Temptations of the Day, been generally encumbred with Errors, and Follies, and with naughty Superfluities. But when the pure Maxims of Truth, and of real, vital, spiritual Religion, and manly Christianity, are sett before the People of God, who can tell, what may be done in some new, and the next Essayes, to bring on the Kingdome of God?[1]

Later this year he set the "Maxims" before the public in a list of fourteen points, upon which we have already commented.[2] In 1717 Mather recorded his intention to "make a fresh essay, to draw up in a plain and brief manner the Points of Religion and Liberty, which the several Parties . . . may and should unite upon:"[3] and in August of this year he stated that he had drawn up an "Instrument of Union" based on the revised list of Maxims, which he proposed to publish and send abroad. This document was Malachi (1717). As we have seen, it offers a condensed list of credenda, mentioned almost as an afterthought in the application: a Trinitarian view of God as Creator and Lord; Jesus Christ as divine redeemer; and the Golden Rule as the norm and test of sanctification.[1] The body of the work, however, deals with piety as the sole qualification of membership in the Kingdom of God, and emphasises that the entrance of this piety is through Christ. It is evident that Mather is intent on finding the absolute minimum of creedal substance which will define and identify live Christians, so that the terms of communion will equal those of regeneration. He wants to draw the broadest circle practicable:

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[1] C. Mather, Diary, II (New York, 1957), 196-7 (April, 1713).

[2] Vide supra, p.

[3] C. Mather, Diary, II (New York, 1957), 467 (July, 1717).

> It is not proposed, That we should make such a, _Quicunque vult_, upon every clause in the INSTRUMENT, as absolutely and positively to pronounce a Sentence of _Damnation_ upon every one who does not subscribe unto it. It is enough, that we _Leave them unto GOD!_ All we have to say, is, that we do not see our selves under Obligations, (nor will they ask us,) to _Unite_ with them, as our _Brethren_, in the Affairs of His Kingdom. It may be proposed, That there should be formed _SOCIETIES_ of Good Men, who can own some such Instrument of _PIETY_.[2]

Piety and Equity of the same year (1717) focusses on Christology as the central issue in ecumenical affairs:

> Now 'tis in a Glorious CHRIST, that all Good men are _United_. 'Tis a Recourse to a Glorious CHRIST as, the _Ensign of the People_, and Looking for a _Glorious Rest_ in and from Him, that _Unites_ them all. Wherein soever they vary from one another, yet here all the _Good men_ in the World are, _One man_, and with _One mouth_ declare, _CHRIST is our All_.
>
> . . . .
>
> The _Rule of Fellowship_ in the Churches of GOD, is that _Golden_ One; Rom. XV.7., _Receive ye one another, as CHRIST also has Received us unto the Glory of GOD_. Those of whom we ought for to Judge, that our _SAVIOUR_ will Receive them to His _Glory_ in the Heavenly World, we ought now to Receive into our Fellowship; and none of the Brotherly Respects due to _Brethren in CHRIST_, are to be witheld from them.[3]

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[1] C. Mather, _Malachi_ (Boston, 1717), p. 33-6.

[2] _Ibid_., p. 92.

[3] C. Mather, _Piety and Equity_ (Boston, 1717), p. 27.

Mather goes on to remark that such a union can only be propagated spiritually, by means of a revival organically uniting the fragments of Christ's church:

> Here, Here is the proper *Basis* for an *Union* among the People of GOD. Attempt any other *Basis*, and it is not *Zion*, but *Babel* that is built upon it; and it will prosper accordingly. Yea, Would you Learn, what is to be done for the *Uniting* of *Differing Parties*? Dont combate so much those which you take to be their *particular Errors*; But Labour to *Draw* them to CHRIST, *Win* them to CHRIST: Render their SAVIOUR dear unto them. They will then drop their *Zeal* for their little *Particularities*, as far as may be necessary to leave Room for your Union with them.[1]

The accomplishment of the ecumenical task is assumed to be part of the millenial revival, and the full flower of Mather's ecumenical thought precisely coincides with the second long period of revivalist expectation occurring in his lifespan, beginning in 1713:

> There has been awakened of late Years, in the Minds of Men, a vehement Inclination, to shake off those *Religious Formalities*, by which they do not find themselves brought nearer to GOD; and to get more into a *Real*, *Vital*, *Spiritual Religion*, and such as will have the *Life of God in the Soul of Man*, with a more transforming Energy operating in it. Multitudes and Millions of People, are at this Day, both among the *Romanists* and among the *Protestants*, thus disposed; and the Disposition which is now too much *imprisoned in Unrighteousness*, will one Day break forth with an astonishing Revolution upon the World. At present, they that are under these Impressions, continue in many *Mistakes* and *Errors*, thro' the fatal Encumbrances that are upon them . . . The Continuance of which *Darkness in their Paths* will be, until the Term allotted by the Great *Lord of Time* for the Antichristian Apostacy be expired. But there is a Time for far off, and probably tremendous Concussions, and Convulsions, and Confusions upon the Nations, will be felt in the Approaches of it, when these *Impressions from God* on the Spirits of Men, will be under a more *Effectual Direction*, disentagling and disengaging them from the *Follies* which many Sectaries have been left unto; and this Panting and Heaving *Tendency to Reformation* will bear down all before it; and nothing shall obstruct the KINGDOM OF GOD, from appearing in an universal Reign of *Holiness* and *Righteousness* among the Nations.[2]

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[1] *Ibid*.

[2] C. Mather, *Things to be More Thought Upon* (Boston, 1713), p. 86-8.

Thus for Mather there can be no revival, and no millenium, unless ecumenical unity is achieved:

> GOD will one day bring His People to Embrace One another upon these Generous MAXIMS; and to keep the Lesser Points in a due Subordination to them; and manage their controversy on the Lesser Points with another Spirit, than what has been too frequent among the Disputers of this world . . . The World will not presently come to This; One Year won't bring them to it. But it may be infallibly foretold until you, God will go on to Shake all Nations, until they come to This. GOD will Overturn, & Overturn, Overturn! Unrighteous Nations, O Foolish People & Unwise; You shall never see Rest until you come to This.[1]

There will be no revival unless there is unity, and the converse is equally true.

Mather was not content, however, to rest in a merely passive 'spiritual' expectation of ecumenism. As usual, he made the matter a project, and the project produced a new society. Shortly after he conceived the idea of the Maxims, he reflected on the idea of forming groups of Christians united one. This basis, and began "studying of Methods to draw Mankind into their Association."[2] The idea was dropped until 1718. A letter of this year to Sir William Ashurst indicates that he could not now be satisfied only with a union of Reformed Christians:

> I am dismissed from any Expectation of much Encouragement, from the Dissenters. And the Truth is, I have dismissed and even divorced myself in a great measure from every Party, but one which is now going to be formed; and in the Formation whereof, the mean hand that now writes, has a Prospect of being somewhat concerned. My Correspondence with the most illustrious Frederician University in the Lower Saxony, where the most glorious Design that ever was managed in the World, is now under a notable Prosecution, has been a Circumstance of great Use to me, in this grand Intention. Your Honour shall give me leave, to think, that you are of it; and indeed all good men are so, tho' sometimes they are not aware of their being so.[3]

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[1] C. Mather, Shaking Dispensations (Boston, 1715), p. 27-8.

[2] C. Mather, Diary, II (New York, 1957), 202 (April, 1713).

[3] Ibid., 511 (February, 1718).

His son records that he succeeded in founding a Society of Peacemakers in 1719.[1]

Mather's ecumenism is certainly imperfect enough when it is viewed from some angles. For one thing, he has a great deal of trouble being civil with Anglican prospects during periods when the English established church was dealing roughly with dissenters. It is not true, as Miller suggests, that he merely uses the concept of toleration as a lever to pry concessions from the government; but he does use it constantly as a club to punish Anglican aggression, and this prejudice can always be distinctly heard when Mather speaks of truly pious Christians as above petty concerns over ceremonial matters.[2] Mather is quick to indicate that his ecumenical charity is not meant to encourage the younger generation in Boston to go back to the abominations of the Anglican faith.[3] His real allergy, of course, is only to the High Church wing, the "Party in the Church of England, which hates to be Reformed."[4] It is ironic that while Francke was enthusiastically doing business with the S. P. G., Mather was privately and publically fed up with this organization, which he correctly felt to be a High Church invasion intenting on recapturing lost ground in New England.[5] He wrote to Thomas Hollis in 1723:

> The Truth is, if all the Remonstrances that we make about a Charity

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[1] Samuel Mather, Life of Cotton Mather, (Boston, 1729), p. 48.

[2] C. Mather, The Stone Cut Out of the Mountain (Boston, 1716), p. 7.

[3] C. Mather, The Wayes and Joyes of Early Piety (Boston, 1712).

[4] C. Mather, Eleutheria (London, 1698), p. 76.

[5] Carl Bridenbaugh (Mitre and Sceptre New York, 1962 , pp. 26, 55-60) shows rather conclusively that the message and stretegy of the S. P. G. in America was less than exclusively evangelical, and that it represented "British imperialism in ecclesiastical guise." He notes that after the Anglican victory at Yale in 1722, with the conversion of Timothy Cutler, the Mathers began to emphasize strongly that there were really

> so abominably prostituted as that of the Society, will only produce a care of our Diocesan to send over better Missionaries we are best as we are. For the Missionaries they have hitherto sent, have generally been such Ignorant Wretches, and such Debauched and Finished Villians, that Like the Rattle snakes in our Country they carry with 'em what warns and arms our People against being poisoned with them.[1]

Toward Baptists Mather is uniformly more charitable. In 1696 he sent money "unto a poor Man, a Preacher in my Neighbourhood, who, I hope, is a good Man, however hee bee not of my Perswasion, but a froward Anabaptist."[2] In 1718 he found a good opportunity to forward the purpose of the Maxims in an invitation to act and preach in the ordination of a Baptist minister in the neighborhood. The instance shows both the reputation of Mather for ecumenicity, and the degree to which he was ahead of his compatriots, for he comments that "My Action will cause much Discourse and Wonder; but . . . I see the Kingdome of God opening in what is now adoing."[3] Mather's dialogue on baptism, published in 1724, attempts to handle the matter "moderately but successfully," and charitably hopes that "God [will] preserve his people on both sides of this controversy, from all foolish passions, for the wrath of man hurts the truth and spoils the cause."[4] On the other hand, Mather is disturbed about the pew-hunters from his congregation who have defected to a local Baptist meetinghouse, where "they never see the Baptism of the Lord administred, nor hear the pathetical and affectionate Prayers made on that Occasion;" and he resolves to seek

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two churches involved in the English church, the Low with which they maintained communion, and the High which they considered simply a remainder of the apostate and persecuting Roman church.

[1] C. Mather, Diary, II (New York, 1957), 691-2.

[2] Ibid., I (New York, 1957), 209 (November, 1696).

[3] Ibid., 530-1 (May, 1718).

[4] C. Mather, Baptistes (Boston, 1724), p. 21.

"proper and prudent Wayes" to reclaim the strayed sheep.[1] It almost seems that Mather's ecumenism was most successfully directed toward those who did not have the drawback of being his neighbors, such as the German Lutherans.

On the other hand, the progressive balance of Mather's ecumenism considerably outweighs it's defects. There are factions within the modern church which are zealous either to unite the church before an inadequate doctrinal and spiritual unity has been established, or else to fold the hands and wait passively forever for some mystical _kairos_ at which the church will be totally revived to their tastes, and happy to unite its organizations. Mather steered a clean course between these extremes, insisting on the primacy of spiritual renewal but making every effort to establish doctrinal and organizational unity. While Mather at his widest will seem narrow to modern vision, anyone familiar with Puritan Calvinism will have to acknowledge the immense maturation of his viewpoint under the impact of Pietism. In later years he wrote to an Arminian:

> Being myself a _Calvinist_, I must needs differ pretty much from a Gentleman who professes himself an _Arminian_. But I consider what those _Maxims of Piety_ are, which engage the Arminian to maintain his _Distinguishing Positions_. Those Maxims are, That the holy and sin-hating Lord must not be Reproached as the Impeller of the Sin, whereof He is the Revenger; that our merciful Father is not to be blasphemed, as if He dealt after an illusory manner with men, when He invites them to His mercy. That none among the Fallen Race of the _First Adam_, are to be shut out from the Hopes of Life in the Death of the _Second Adam_; and Impenitent Unbelievers must not cast on God the blame of their unbelief, but the Wicked must lay wholly on themselves the Fault of their own Destruction; and that Men must _work out their own Salvation_ with as much Industry, and Agony, and Vigilancy, as if all turned upon their own Will and Care, whether they shall be Saved or no. Now these are _Maxims_ which every pious Calvinist will most heartily consent unto. And if I should repeat the _Maxims of Piety_ which make me fall in with the Position of a Calvinist, prerequisite unto the supporting of them, I am confident the pious Mr. de La Pilloniere would most heartily subscribe unto

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[1] _Ibid_., II (New York, 1957), 53 (March, 1711).

> them. And we shall both have the Modesty to confess that we have to do with Matters which are to us Incomprehensible. Now if Good Men are so United in the Maxims which are the End, for the serving whereof they declare that they pursue their Controversies, why should not this Uniting Piety put an end unto their Controversies? and beat their Swords into Ploughshares, and their Spears into Pruning-Hooks?[1]

This statement demonstrates the fact that Mather felt himself on a kind of high ground, in the possession of biblical piety, from which all the theological Gordian knots created in former contentions could be untied. He felt that the key of a vitallized Christian experience was sufficient to unlock all the doors built up between genuine Christians through misunderstanding, and in this conviction the best men in the Puritan and Pietist movements, and those who would come in the period of the Great Awakening, were agreed.[2]

D. The Concern for a World Mission

Mather's theory of millenial awakening and his ecumenical interests are closely connected with another feature in which he foreshadows the future of Protestantism: his concern for world missions. This same mixture of components may have existed in some Continental Pietists and even in the "Ökumenische Geheimtheologie" at Halle. There was certainly an open connection in European Pietism between the ecumenical and missionary ideals, since Francke enlisted support from all Protestant communities for the

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[1] C. Mather, Letter to F. de La Pilloniere (Boston, 1717), p. 3.

[2] Trinterud points out that Samuel Davies, and the Tennants in their soberest mind, were concerned for the ecumenical effect of the revival (The Forming of an American Tradition [Philadelphia, 1949], pp. 131-2). Nagler observes that Wesley was in agreement with Spener, that church union would eventually come as the outgrowth of revival (Pietism and Methodism [Nashville, 1918], p. 141).

Danish mission at Malabar.[1] The same connection had been operative earlier, in the seventeenth century, in England. Dury had been moved partly by an urgency for world mission in his ecumenical concern,[2] and had been active in promoting the Eliot's mission to the Indians. Baxter had observed, "No part of my prayers are so deeply serious as that for the conversion of the infidel and ungodly world."[3]

Cotton Mather imbibed his own early interest in Christian mission throughout the world from Puritan sources. Edmund Morgan has speculated that by the time of the Mathers the New England clergy had gained sufficient control of the situation that they were looking out at one another with thoughts of consociation, and out at the world with a concern for mission which had leisure to expand beyond their own particular parish, on which earlier generations of Congregational clergy had been perhaps too concentrated. But there was a definite turning-point in Cotton Mather's life, at which he felt himself called effect a revolution in his own sensibility, which would direct his concern more generally toward the state of the gospel enterprise in other churches and the world at large. This occurred exactly at the time of his first burst of millenial enthusiasm for the outpouring of the Spirit, in February of 1696.[1] In July of this year he writes,

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[1] E. Beyreuther, August Hermann Francke, 1663-1727, Zeuge des lebendigen Gottes (2te Aufl., Marburg, 1961), pp. 192-8. This work was begun in 1705 at the incentive of King Frederick IV of Denmark, who had been influenced by Leibniz' plans for missionary work in China. The King secured two missionaries, a young graduate of Halle named Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg and one Heinrich Pluetschau of Mecklenburg, and sent them first to Guinea in Africa, and then to Malabar in India. The mission miraculously survived a great deal of anti-Pietist counterscheming by the local governor, and the letters which the missionaries sent back about the mission (translated into English by Boehm in 1709) brought forth an amazingly wide response of support from Christians in all communions in Europe. The moving force behind the mission gradually came to be Francke, who was advising the King and his court preacher, while promoting the mission from his position in Halle. Vide E. Beyreuther, Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg, tr. by S. G. Land and H. W. Gensichen (1st Eng. ed., Madras, 1955), passim.

[2] J. M. Batten, John Dury, (Chicago, 1944), pp. 11-12, 139.

[3] Hugh Martin, Puritanism and Richard Baxter (London, 1954), p. 187.

> I sett myself to consider, That, altho' in my Devotions I had still remembred the *Churches* and *Interests* of my Lord Jesus Christ, abroad in the World, yett I had not arrived unto a due *Enlargement* of Soul, in my doing so. Wherefore I now lamented before the Lord, the *Privateness* and *Selfishness* of Spirit, which in my former Devotion had attended mee; and I resolved, that I, as poor and as vile, as I am, would now become a *Remembrancer* unto the Lord, for no less than whole *Peoples*, Nations, and Kingdomes. I apprehended with myself that if I would thus lay to Heart the *Concerns* of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the State of whole *Peoples*, and Continue, with extraordinary Supplications crying to Heaven, for mercy to them, I should bee more Angelically disposed and employed, than I have been heretofore; and I should prepare myself also for very *extensive Services* to bee done by mee; and I should enjoy unutterable *Communications* from the Holy Ghost then Delighting in mee; yea, and perhaps, *Manifestations* of what the Lord is *going to do in the Earth*.[2]

From this burst of curiously self-centered altruism onward, Mather set himself to become one of the great spiritual statesmen of his time, one of those watchman on the walls of Christendom who plant and pluck up kingdoms. During the rest of his career, in his prayers for world revival, he felt himself dwelling in the actuality of this role, with every promise in his first intimation of such a calling fulfilled. From this point on the entries in his Diary are filled with prayerful reflections on the news from Europe, viewed against a background of concern for the progress of world Protestantism, at first centering on the interests of Puritanism and then broadening to include evangelicals over every kind. The concept of the "gapman", the solitary individual of eminent piety who takes on the world as his parish and stands in the gap in times of decline to avert the wrath of God, continued to preoccupy him until his death.[1] In 1717 he observed that

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[1] Barrett Wendell notes that in this year Mather began to be deeply interested in foreign news (*Cotton Mather* New York, 1892 , p. 155).

[2] C. Mather, *Diary*, I (New York, 1957), . 199-200 (July, 1696).

> Among the people of GOD, there are some, who are *Conspicuously Favoured* of Him, in His *Answers of the Prayers,* which they make unto Him. There are some, whose *Prayer availeth much*; Some who have the *Golden Key* to the Treasures of Mercy, under a skillful, powerful, successful management; Some who have their Petitions to Heaven so granted, that *all they who see them, acknowledge them* to be the *Favorites* of Heaven. It may be said unto them, as in Gen. XXXII:28, *As a Prince thou hast power with God*.[2]

In a sermon commemorating G. Saltonstall Mather comments on such men who are blessings to their environs because they pray for them, and like Abraham and Lot retard God's judgment; and because they contrive to do good by their advice, their examples and their various projections to reform and retard evil.

But Mather did not limit his zeal for missionary concern to exceptional men such as he felt himself to be; he urged it upon his own people, and upon laymen and ministers everywhere. In 1695 he had urged Christians to take pity on the world, two-thirds of which was still pagan and lying in the control of the Devil, and had urged the offering of prayer in missionary concern. "By being much in Prayer, we may like *Noah*, like *Job*, like *Daniel*, we may our selves be *publick Blessings*; we may be the *gapmen* of the places in which we live; we may deliver *Islands*, and be the Saviours of our Country."[3] A particularly powerful and moving example of this is his *Advice to the Churches of the Faithful* of 1702. This work begins with a prayer for world revival, "A Few Sighs for a Distressed Church, For the Dispersed Israelites," which includes petitions for the ailing Puritan heart-line of Christendom, the Greek churches, those under Muslim and Roman oppression, the American churches, and the ungospellized parts of the earth: "Lord, *Let the Sun of Righteousness at last Shine upon the Dark Recesses in these goings down of the Sun; and let the Son of God, have these Ends of the Earth for His Possession*. In fine; Come, Lord JESUS, come quickly!"[1] Mather goes on to charge his readers with the duty of prayer, and to re-emphasize the millenial and revivalist elements which should inspire this prayer:

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[1] Cf. Ezekiel 22:30 (KJV): "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it . . ."

[2] C. Mather, *The Tribe of Asher* (Boston, 1717), p. 11.

[3] C. Mather, *Batteries upon the Kingdom of the Devil* (London, 1695), p. 57.

> Every *Christian*, who is any more than a *Rotten* or a *Wooden* Member, in this *Mystical Body* of our Lord, will be still sensibly touched with its uneasy circumstances, and be heartily *sollicitous* about it. There is much of Omen . . . of Mighty and Happy *Changes* nigh unto the *Church*, when God stirs up the Hearts of His Praying People, to be much in *Prayer* for them. Wherefor it appears one of the worst Symptoms upon our *Evil Time*, That there is no more *Striving* & *Wrestling* in *Prayer* among the People of God, for His Mercy to His Distressed People. *O Lord, be merciful*! *What a Dead Sleep are thy People, & even the Watchman of thy People fallen into*! Nevertheless, there are some so much *Awake*, as to be Inquisitive after the Condition of the *Church* at this Day . . .[2]

The peculiar blending of optimistic urgency and pessimism here is echoed again in *Another Tongue*, a tract for the Indians which Mather published in Iroquois, Latin, English, and German, aiming at a maximal audience (and perhaps at maximum public notice). Mather was considerably upset by the zeal of Catholic missionaries, who had newly penetrated to the Iroquois in America.

> Certainly, The zeal of *Protestants*, to Propagate our Holy Religion, well Purified from the *Popish Mixtures*, ought to be more Flaming,

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[1] C. Mather, *An Advice from the Churches* (Boston, 1702), p. 2.

[2] *Ibid*., pp. 3-4.

> more Lively, than any thing that we can see in the Church of Rome . . . Verily, Did we Love our Glorious CHRIST, or had we any agreeable Sense of the Vast Obligation, which He had laid upon us, how Studious, how Vigorous would be our Endeavors to bring all men to Know Him, & Serve Him, and have Him Glorified among all Nations of Men! Oh! That a Spirit for the Propagation of Christianity, were more Operative among those, Who say they are Christians! The want of it, makes it sadly questionable, How far we are, from what we Say! Had not the Spirit of God very dreadfully abandoned Christendom, there would be seen a Thousand Times more of it, than there is. Blessed SPIRIT, Oh! Return, and Visit, this Miserable World; and let marvellous things be done by thy Operations![1]

Mather's resources and energies were mainly employed in supporting already existing mission works, by prayer, gifts, and publicity, rather than in the organization of new ministries. By far the majority of his references to mission relate to the work already established among the Indians in America.[2] The detailed description of Eliot's work in the Magnalia[3] shows Mather's interest in those "hedious creatures" for whom he displayed a lifelong compassion mingled with the element of fear and vindictiveness which emerges in his writings on the Indian wars.[4] In 1699 he began work on a tract "to make the Knowledge of Christ, and Christianity, more effectually apprehended among the Indians";[5] and this was published in 1700. It style is an interesting effort to get close to the Indian milieu:

> The English have been your great Friends; you must be for them . . . if you be their enemies, or help their enemies, you will Requite Evil for Good, and you will be, as if an Indian should bring to

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[1] C. Mather, Another Tongue (Boston, 1707), pp. 2-3.

[2] For a more extensive handling of this subject, which is, however, confined principally to the Magnalia, vide Sidney H. Rooy, The Theology of Missions in the Puritan Tradition (Grand Rapids, 1965), pp. 242-328.

[3] C. Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana, I (Hartford, 1855), 556-75.

[4] Ibid., II (Hartford, 1855), 552-644.

[5] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 304 (June, 1699).

> the fireside a Snake frozen and starved, and the Snake, after he is comforted, should sting the kind Indian and kill him.
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> . . . .
>
> You shall be blessed with the Lord Jesus Christ, infinitely more years than you see stars in the Sky, or stones on the Earth, or Drops of water in the Rivers.[1]

The unconscious colonialism here is borne out in the body of the work, which after a brief statement of Reformed essentials gives the Decalogue in detail and concludes with a warning against drunkenness, the inflammatory sin to which the Indians were especially susceptible. Samuel Mather notes that in 1708 Mather took the trouble to learn Iroquois so that he could reach this tribe.[2]

There are a large number of diary references to concern for the Indians in Mather's later years, beginning about 1711. He is concerned about the discipline in the Indian churches and the report of oppressions practiced by the English on them;[3] and later in the year he "animates" the commisioners of Indian affairs to investigate these matters.[4] In October of this year he remarks that

> By a prudent and faithful Visitation of the Indians, we are furnished with very punctual Account of . . . their Circumstances; and we have something on which we may proceed unto numberless Actions for the Kingdome of our Saviour, and the Welfare of that miserable People. I propose, that the Commissioners of the Indian-affayrs, may now have their very frequent Meetings.[5]

In November he notes the number of proposals for Indian welfare which he has made to the Commissioners, including the sending of missionaries to the Mohicans in Connecticut and the rewarding of sober Indians with gifts of hats which he procured for them;[1] and several subsequent references reflect a fairly single-hearted concern for the spiritual and physical welfare of the Christian Indians in a number of different locations.[2] In 1717 he is concerned to procure an attorney for the congregation on Martha's Vineyard.[3] Entering the melancholy decade of the 20's, Mather finds the same decline in the Indian mission work that is evident to him in the rest of world Christendom. The *India Christiana* of 1721, sommenting on the glory of the past work among the Indians, admits that at present "'*Tis a Day of Small things* . . . *Religion* . . . is under a Decay among them."[4] And yet Mather urges the continuance of the mission, and especially the instruction of the Indians in the English tongue: "If but a *Few* of them, should be brought into a Sincere *Love* of *GOD* and of their Neighbour, and a Living *Faith* on our only *Saviour*, it will be richly worth all the Time and Cost that has been laid out upon them all."[5] A letter to Lieutenant Governor Dummer, the head of the Commission, in 1725, laments the condition of "dying Religion among these miserable objects," and urges the appointment of a "Visitor" to enquire into the "Languishing State of many things."[6]

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[1] E. Mather, Epistle to the Christian Indians (Boston, 1700), pp. 3, 14.

[2] S. Mather, Life of Cotton Mather (Boston, 1729), p. 49.

[3] C. Mather, Diary, II (New York, 1957), 48 (March, 1711).

[4] Ibid., 78 (June, 1711).

[5] Ibid., 120-1 (October, 1711).

In the succession of Mather's writings dealing with Indian missions, there is a perceptible shift away from the pragmatic motive of protecting the colonists through spiritual pacification of the Indians, toward a pure and outspoken concern for their spiritual welfare, as they became less of an immediate threat. Probably this was Mather's principal concern all along, but in his earlier attempts to rouse public support for this mission, he correctly judged that the most sensitive nerves in New Englanders were involved in their sense of self-preservation.

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[1] Ibid., 132-3 (November, 1711).

[2] Ibid., 143 (December, 1711); 182 (February, 1712/13).

[3] Ibid., 396 (February, 1717).

[4] C. Mather, *India Christiana* (Boston, 1721), p. 40.

[5] *Ibid*., p. 44.

[6] C. Mather, *Diary*, II (New York, 1957), pp. 807-9.

The *India Christiana* reflects the fact that Mather's missionary concern embraced the 'Indians" of all sectors of the globe, including the islands of the West Indies to the South, and the East Indian mission at Malabar. In May of 1706 he mentions a concern for "the distressed Condition of the American Islands,"[1] and in 1718 he is involved in the "Settlement of the evangelical Affairs at *Barmudas*."[2] There is more widespread mention of the East Indian missions, especially the Pietist mission, which he directly supported.[3]

The concern to be a watchman on the walls of world Christendom involved Mather in other missionary projects besides the Indies, in which he grappled tentatively with the missionary's task of identifying with the culture he seeks to reach. His concerns included, first, the winning of souls in civilized countries which he regarded as oppressed by the Islamic or Roman Catholic systems of Antichrist.[4] In 1699 he learned the elements of Spanish in a matter of two weeks in order to satisfy an urgent concern to produce a tract for the conversion of South Americans from Catholicism. The resulting work is highly theological in tone and covertly polemic, and shows less ability to empathize with the subjects of his mission than some of his other tracts.[1] In keeping with his millenial interest, he produced a tract to reach the Jews around this time, which is even more pugnacious and inclined to scare the fish he sought to catch, but carefully couched in Old Testament language.[2] From 1696 onward he is also much concerned with the progress of the gospel in home missions for English-speaking peoples. The condition of religion in the outlying plantations was a burden of concern to him throughout his life. In February of 1697 he mentions that he and his congregation made "a liberal Contribution for the Propagation of the Gospel unto the dark Places in our Borders,"[3] and this remained a persistent concern, as his Letter to Ungospellized Plantations (1702) and a number of diary entries indicate.[4] He was interested also in "evangelical missions" -- that is, Puritan ones -- to the other colonies, and particularly in Jamaica, Long Island, and New Amsterdam.[5] In April, 1713, he secured and financed a young man as an itinerant missionary in "the southern Colonies."[6] He was also continuously involved in the vital interests of churches closer to home, in Massachusetts and Connecticut.[1] And of course he was regularly involved in the care of other churches in Boston.[2] In 1725, he proposed the establishment of what amounts to a denominational -- or even ecumenical -- fund for domestic and foreign missions:

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[1] *Ibid.*, I (New York, 1957), 563 (May, 1706).

[2] *Ibid.*, I (New York, 1957), 532 (May, 1718).

[3] *Ibid.*, II (New York, 1957), 348 (May, 1716); 365 (August, 1716); 516 (February, 1718); 517 (February, 1718); 520 (March, 1718); 544 (July, 1718). Most of these citations are short entries concerning Mather's support of the Malabar mission in prayer, or by contributions of gold. For incidental mention of the mission in letters to Boehm, *vide ibid.*, 333, 411n. Cf. also E. Benz, "Pietist and Puritan Sources of Early Protestant World Missions," *Church History*, XX (1951), 28-55.

[4] C. Mather, *American Tears upon the Ruins of the Greek Churches* (Boston, 1701), p. 35; *Diary*, II (New York, 1957), 80 (June, 1711), a concern for the Greek churches under Islam; I (New York, 1957), 402 (September, 1701), for proselytes in Spain and Portugal.

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[1] C. Mather, La Fe del Christiano (Boston, 1699).

[2] C. Mather, The Faith of the Fathers (Boston, 1699); cf. the Diary, I (New York, 1957), 298 (April, 1699), where Mather indicates that his authorship of the tract is due to an urgent desire to help precipitate the Millenium.

[3] C. Mather, Diary, I (New York, 1957), 217 (February, 1697).

[4] Ibid., 426 (May, 1702); 554 (March, 1706); 574 (November, 1706); 593 (July, 1707); II (New York, 1957), 78 (June, 1711); 471-2 (August, 1717).

[5] Ibid., II (New York, 1957), 132 (November, 1711).

[6] Ibid., 353 (May, 1716).

> The First and Main Intention of this EVANGELICAL TREASURY, is to be, THE PROPAGATION OF RELIGION. And therefore, when any Essays of Good, are to be made upon Ungospellized Places, (more particularly, for helping of Missionaries, or building of Meeting-Houses) the Neighbouring Ministers may inform the Churches.[3]

It is easy to discern the fact that a part of Mather's urgency in embracing such a wide scope of concerns is the desire to be a great man. But while this may have been part of his initial motivation, we cannot say that something more did not develop in him as he continued in a lifetime of prayer for world mission. To some of his contemporaries he doubtless seemed the incarnation of prying interference. To our own contemporaries who view him mainly in a political dimension, like Perry Miller, even this altruism is only a stalking horse for political strategy. He did not, like Francke or Wesley, initiate missionary structures, but only prayed for and worked through the ones already created by other men. Still, perhaps, he deserves a niche close to these men who adopted the world as their parish; for we know of no more vigilant watchman on the walls of Zion among the ministry in America, one who had so much at heart the afflictions of Joseph throughout the entire oikumene.

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[1] Ibid., 46 (March, 1711), 105 (September, 1711), and 112 (October, 1711), the church at Salem; 160 (February, 1712), churches at Sherborn and Groton; 226 (August, 1713), the church at Newtown; 750 (August, 1724), dissension in the church at Harwich.

[2] Ibid., I (New York, 1957), 316-17 (September, 1699), procuring a minister for the Old South Church; II (New York, 1957), 460 (June, 1717), and 505 (February, 1718), difficulties in the New South church.

[3] C. Mather, A Proposal for an Evangelical Treasury (Boston, 1725), p. 2.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Faith, as it is now in Vogue, signifieth no more than a stiff adhering to a certain Sect or Denomination of Men, and a zealous Defence of such particular Tenets as have been received and approved of by that Party. All the Ingredients of such a Faith, are nothing but humane Education, Custom, Tradition, Perswasion, Conversation, and the like. The Zeal which goeth along with it, is the Product of Self-Love, and of corrupt Reason, the two great Framers of Sects and Party-Notions.

True Christianity, according to its intrinsick Constitution, is an active, lively, strong, vigorous Principle, seated in the inmost Center of the Soul, and swaying by its Dictates all the Actions that proceed from it: But the Christianity now in Vogue, hardly toucheth the Heart at all . . . True Christianity is a Creation of God. But the Advocates of false Christianity, do not rise above themselves, but spin all their religious Duties, as it were, out of their own Bowels. There is nothing of Heaven in it; nothing of Grace; nothing of the divine Nature.

Another Character of True Christianity is, to be principally concerned with the Essentials and Substantials of Religion: Such as is the great Work of Faith and of the New Birth, with the Rest of Christian Virtues that freely accompany it; as Resignation, Mortification, Imitation of Christ, Self-Abnegation, Contrition, and others relating to the inward Principle of GRACE, and its various Effects and Operations. But the False Christian is chiefly, if not only, busie about the ceremonious Part, and some accessory and circumstantial Points. He bringeth forth every Age, if not every Year, new Schemes, new Models, new Projects of Religion. He mouldeth it one Time into this, and again at other Times into another Form, according as the Humour of the Age, and the interest of Men worketh, which with him hath the greatest Influence in Affairs of Religion. And at this rate, alas! the Substance of Christianity lieth neglected, in the midst of so many Schemes, framed under Pretence to support it!

There will be a Time, when the Church of Christ will come up from the Wilderness of various Sects, Parties, Nations, Languages, Forms, and Ways of Worship, nay of Crosses and Afflictions, leaning upon her Beloved, and in his Power bidding Defiance to all her Enemies. Then shall that Church, which now doth but look forth as the Morning in its Dawn, after a continual Growth in Strength and Beauty, appear Terrible as an Army with Banners; but terrible to those only that despised her whilst she was in her Minority, and would not have her Beloved to reign over them.

-- A. W. Boehm, in Johann Arndt's Of True Christianity, pp. v ff.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study has identified Cotton Mather as an important link in a long chain of witnesses, within the Christian church, who have pursued the development and full expression of 'the spiritual life.' This tradition includes as its most authentic exponents the principal fathers of the early church, certain of the Medieval and pre-Reformation mystics, the Puritans and Pietists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Protestant Evangelicals. It is our contention that this tradition is the major growth zone within Western Christendom, the seminal core from which constructive change has issued within the church; and that there is a general progress within this line -- with occasional lengthy deviations and interruptions -- toward a genuinely biblical expression of interior piety and exterior mission. Development over the last five centuries within this tradition has addressed itself to the solution of two main problems. The first has even the purification of Catholic piety, through the elimination of Judaistic and other extra-Christian components, with the restructuring of the Christian life on an authentic Pauline basis, combining in biblical tension the elements of justification and sanctification. The second has been the formulation of a post-Constantinian and non-theocratic missionary strategy, containing in proper balance the concerns for individual redemption and physical and social healing. It is our conclusion that Cotton Mather is a uniquely important 'capacitor' within this theological and spiritual current, recapitulating in his own piety much of the ontogeny of the spiritual life in the early church, but remarkably charged with potential for the future. For this line of development, he is the most important man of his generation in America, with only a handful of peers in the rest of Western Christendom.

During the course of this thesis we have already offered a number of conclusions about Mather's part in the progress of his tradition -- the points at which he merely adjusted where he might have innovated, and other areas where he conserved insights of timeless value, and recognized new emphases which held the heart of the future. It is of little value to rehearse these comments here, since most of them are incorporated in the statement of the thesis in the Introductory Synopsis. It may be useful, however, to develop two additional lines of thought: the light which this study throws upon the unity and stature of Mather's character, and the implications of his concerns for the present life of the church.

While Mather's critics, and even his friends, have generally described his thought and his personality as a composition of opposites, his theology is thoroughly self-consistent. His character is really equally coherent. Many of his supposed inconsistencies result from an attempt to conjoin the testimony of his friends to that of his enemies. This procedure will reduce any historical figure of major importance to schizophrenia. Other problems in understanding Mather issue from the basic unfamiliarity of most critics with Puritan spirituality and the total history of Christian experience. What appears abnormal and grotesque, in a secular context, is often rather typical against the background of the history of Christian spirituality. Seen in this setting, Mather is merely an ordinary contemplative mystic -- albeit with a few distinctive spiritual problems.

But again, some of these problems are only apparent, resulting from the nature of the data which Mather left us concerning his own inner life. Mather's diary has complicated the task of interpreting him historically almost as much as it has helped, for it spills out the contents of his experience with an unbalanced selectivity, and a multiplicity of detail, which cannot fail to mislead men who spend less time looking at themselves -- and, when they do, neglect to use a biblical mirror. Beyond this, we cannot take all the traits which Mather reveals about himself, openly or unconsciously, and compress them into one consistent personality. Mather's own psychology would confine certain characteristics in his life to the renewed man in Christ, would attribute others to a wholly separate and organically integrated personality persisting from his unregenerate nature, and would perhaps allow for a third source of accusatory self-images injected into his thoughts, and hence into the Diary, by demonic forces. Whatever our current psychology may be, it cannot insist that all the facets revealed in the diary records were present in the 'normal Mather,' in the man as he truly functioned in daily situations of responsibility and action.

Long-distance psychological analysis of Mather is, however, a difficult and probably fruitless task, even for those with more professional training than the average historian. (Even the recent sutdy of President Wilson by two of his contemporaries, William Bullitt and Sigmund Freud, has been widely criticized as unscientific and inaccurate.) It cannot be definitely proved from the data that Mather was 'neurotic,' paranoid, masochistic, sexually maladjusted, or even hypochondriacal; and several of these conditions are in fact contra-indicated. Mather's friends speak of him as a balanced and urbane gentleman, and his enemies do not accuse him of insanity but of credulity and meddlesomeness, qualities which were programmed into every Puritan of his generation, and not the result of psychological stress. Mather's relationship with his father sounds very nearly perfect in mutual respect and love, without any hint of dominance and rebellion. His life with his first two wives was evidently full of real tenderness and affection. As for Mather's persecution complex; he was, in fact, persecuted; he was a main leader on one side of a religio-political war, and quite naturally he drew fire. The fact that he interpreted all of this in terms of a spiritual conflict for the prevailing of the gospel in New England does not necessarily imply megalomania. From his own doctrinal position, he could come to no other conclusion; and he was supported by biblical examples which would today prove every psalmist to be paranoid. The occasional expressions of rage and vindictiveness in his diary undoubtedly reveal moral weakness under pressure. Either he was honest enough to leave these in, assuming any future readers would understand the crushing injustices he was suffering, or he found theological support for these in the imprecatory psalms.

On the other hand, the one charge against Mather which must be sustained by the evidence is that of egocentricity. This defect was practically thrust upon him by his precocity, his gifts, his position of leadership, and, above all, by his theology. Puritan conversion was rooted in a fearful search for ultimate self-preservation, aggravated by an insistence on interior evidences for acceptance with God. The resulting crisis of introspection left a centripetal bias on the souls of Puritans for the rest of their lives. Thus the foci of attention in much of Mather's life were these: not God, but his experience of God; not men, but the fruitfulness of his ministry toward men. We do not often gaze outward through his diary into the grandeur in the face of God, or into the drama of the lives of his people, or the events of his age; we look down into the close confines of his ego, aching with conviction or exalted in ecstasy. Whether he is berating his own depravity, or lamenting his pride, or projecting a great work for God, there is the endless, monotonous, and quite unconscious self-referrence, taking the temperature of his soul and probing the state of his destiny. It might be understandable if this were confined to the Diary; but in scores of sermons we can observe the same compulsive side-glances at his career and reputation, as if a mirror were continually being inserted between himself and his audience. This self-consciousness might have been hidden by a thousand men of greater basic egotism but sharper worldly and literary prudence. But Mather's egocentricity is so innocently displayed precisely because it is almost felt to be a virtue. It was, after all, a 'normal' product of his theological assumptions.

Compounding this weakness is the problem of Mather's style, which is exactly the worst vehicle for a person with the problem of unconscious vanity, although for this reason it is perhaps the most natural. With its departure from the plain style and cold serious logic of his father into a fantastic and humorous floridity -- its puns, tropes, allusions, and encrustations of literary jewelry -- it is constantly in danger of the ridiculous, whenever Mather's taste, or his ear, fails; and this failure is all too frequent, except in the handful of works which he really labored to edit and revise. The result is that Mather often sounds insincere even when he is basically serious, and so is thoroughly vulnerable to casual misreading by his critics.

Nevertheless, when we look past these weaknesses and try to determine the stature of Mather, we must find him to be a far greater man in his generation, both by intrinsic merit and in terms of his wide-reaching influence, than he is usually portrayed to be. If his voice lacks the depth and timbre of Edwards' in the next generation -- a man who was in actuality many of the things Mather was only trying to be -- he was still involved in breaking ground for the movement Edwards came to represent. He had the sensitivity to appreciate spiritual excellence wherever he saw it in his world, and the wisdom to recognize and applaud some of the forces which were to mold the future church. When we consider the immense body of published material from his pen, and the large number of persons eager to subsidize these works or to publish them, we must conclude that he was the dominant single intellectual influence on his generation in America. This influence did not end with his death, but persisted in the great microcosm of the *Magnalia*, relaying in its saga the condensed world-picture of the early Puritans; in the *Manuductio ad Ministerium*, still being used as a ministerial guidebook in the nineteenth century; and in *Bonifacius*, which contained the sedds of the Benevolent Empire.

Whatever the stature of Mather as an individual, the Puritan theology of Christian experience has certain implications for our present situation in the church which are of critical importance. Much of American Christianity is still reacting allergically to some components of the Puritan synthesis. Puritan morality, which abolished the Medieval double standard in ethics by making 'counsels of perfection' obligatory for all Christians, is still the main focus of popular distaste; but there is also an established distrust toward 'the Old Testament God,' 'hellfire and damnation,' 'emotionalism,' 'introspection,' and anything which threatens to be 'too religious.' The motivation for much of this reaction will not bear the light of day, nor will it dare to risk biblical comparisons. But there were unstable elements in the Puritan experiential synthesis which inevitably caused spiritual difficulty and consequent allergy. We have seen how the loading of conversion, assurance by infused contemplation rather than by faith and commitment of the will, and an uncalvinistic use of the doctrine of predestination in evangelism could lead to discouragement and alienation in weak believers. We can also see that the Puritan insistence on walking by experience, rather than by a naked and outward-gazing faith, introduces an involution of sensibility in Christians. Barth speaks of a "piety of listening," in which the believer fixes his gaze on God, and concentrates on His grace addressing the soul, as opposed to a "piety of speaking," in which he looks endlessly into himself, and talks to God about what is going on there, and what he will do for Him. In its striving against cheap grace and toward an existentially responsible Christianity, Puritanism frequently lapsed into a piety of speaking and doing, instead of hearing and receiving. This defect forced upon the Christian believer the task of projecting toward God a continuous apologia for the state of his inner experience. Mather struggled against these problems; but there were elements in the system which inevitably created in his life an invisible gravity of self-concern, which continually drew his thinking into planetary revolution around the ego.

On the other hand, every 'spiritual awakening' in the church since the Reformation has been in basic continuity with Puritan spirituality. The roots of world missions, ecumenism, and authentically Christian social activism are unmistakeably identified historically with this tradition. And the present situation of the church in the world seems to argue for the necessity of a new 'awakening,' for there are disturbing similarities between the condition we face and that which Mather's generation encountered. As in New England's spiritual decline, there is a fragmentation of the unity of culture -- not, this time, because of how the loading of conversion, assurance by infused contemplation rather than by faith and commitment of the will, and an uncalvinistic use of the doctrine of predestination in evangelism could lead to discouragement and alienation in weak believers. We can also see that the Puritan insistence on walking by experience, rather than by a naked and outward-gazing faith, introduces an involution of sensibility in Christians. Barth speaks of a "piety of listening," in which the believer fixes his gaze on God, and concentrates on His grace addressing the soul, as opposed to a "piety of speaking," in which he looks endlessly into himself, and talks to God about what is going on there, and what he will do for Him. In its striving against cheap grace and toward an existentially responsible Christianity, Puritanism frequently lapsed into a piety of speaking and doing, instead of hearing and receiving. This defect forced upon the Christian believer the task of projecting [illegible]tinuous *apologia* for the state of his inner experi[illegible]d against these problems; but there were element[illegible]nevitably created in his life an invisible gravity [illegible]ch continually drew his thinking into planetary revoluti[illegible]go.

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Facing this situation, the church is itself largely unawakened; it is at best stirring in its sleep. It is again uneasily aware of the absence of 'the power of godliness' in the life it lives and the answers it offers. A disturbingly large percentage of the nation's parishes are engaged in going through the motions of a domesticated culture-Protestantism, a 'churchianity,' which is rightly rejected by young people, and most emphatically by the younger ministers. But the Neo-Liberal theology in vogue in these circles frustrates even its advocates by its inability to move the mass of the laity toward concern for social progress. In pursuit of this goal, it has moved so close to the dominant secular ideologies, with so tenuous an anchorage in biblical realities, that it is in more danger of losing converts than of winning them; and it often seems as if this segment of the church is about to expire in a blaze of relevance.

The root of its failure is its inadequate grasp of the depth of the problem involved in the human condition: it does not often ask for the total conversion to God which the Puritans demanded, but limits itself to the application of the second table of the Law, in the guise of a call for love, justice, and reconciliation on a horizontal level.

The various scholastic orthoxies which hang on doggedly at points within the church are more theocentric and more biblically literate; but they are still vulnerable at the same points attacked by Arndt and Spener, They are too negligent of sanctification, and too largely unaware of the need for dependence on the Spirit, to be the instruments of an awakening. Neo-Reformation theology has correctly sought for the same biblical reality of personal confrontation with God in Christ which the Pietists sought, but its advocates have often been satisfied to be the exponents of a form of existentialism, rather than agents of a movement which would be pastorally, existentially biblical in its approach to the spiritual lives of individuals. While rooted firmly in an understanding of the priority of spiritual life over conceptual formulations, it has not succeeded in being a medium of popular spiritual awakening, as Edward Farley indicates. The resulting vacuum has been filled in the public milieu by theologically shallow variants from the Puritan tradition, which have lacked the intellectual strength and cultural depth to hold the mind of the church's leadership -- although, despite their weaknesses, these have managed to convey to the spiritually hungry the essential synthesis of faith in Christ, and repentance toward new life, which is the core of the Puritan/Pietist thrust. This Revivalism, however, has until recently been trapped in an invalid theology of culture, an anti-intellectualism which has led to cultic isolation and an inappropriate response to social needs, an overloading of the conversion event, with a neglect of consequent sanctification. Many of the components of an adequate strategy to meet the present crisis are somehow splintered through all these groups, which too frequently refuse to listen to one another both with discernment and with Christian charity.

Among all these elements, however, what is perhaps the most vital ingredient needed for broad-scale popular awakening in the church is the assertion of a standard of individual spirituality which can recapture the strength and depth of the Puritan/Pietist synthesis without also reproducing its damaging imperfections. Such a concept of the Christian life could very well be sublimated from the older tradition with the aid of Reformation and New Testament criteria; and perhaps history itself has already been at work in its distillation. Farley's contention that all previous forms of piety are wholly inadequate for the future is really only a way of saying that the theologies prevalent today are so mutually contradictory with respect to Christian experience that they cancel each other out, if they are all entertained simultaneously, and make any form of piety impossible. But Puritanism aims at something which is eternally relevant, and perpetually at the heart of the biblical witness: personal spiritual transformation through encounter with God and apprehension of the grace of Christ, and the development of this in a life of obedient communion with God, and love toward man. This may be the elixir which is needed to move the hearts of our laity to respond to the social tasks of the church in this age. Their 'pietistic individualism' is not the authentic Puritan/Pietist life of developed Christian experience, but only natural self-interest masking itself in religious emotionalism. Where the hearts of individuals are genuinely transformed, as they were in Halle under Francke, the water of life flows forth not only to heal individuals, but also to make these responsive to leadership to leadership in social education and action; and the face of communities is transformed. This is not to claim that a 'spiritual' and individualistic approach must be all that the church attempts, as misguided laymen tell us; it is merely to say that the church's prophetic witness will be only a shrill, metallic crying in the wilderness -- a Jeremiad! -- unless it can also address itself to the task of changing the spiritual and intellectual grass roots of its constituency.

In one sense our situation today is infinitely more promising than that of New England before the Awakening. The shape of our culture at this point in history threatens the possibility of an unparalleled tragedy, but it also holds out the promise of one of those vast lateral expansions of Christianity which we call spiritual awakenings. The awakenings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries made the church ready to ride the wave of colonial expansion, in a new broadening of its missionary impact. That wave has passed, but a new one is rising. Assuming the survival of mankind, the last decades of this century may see a phenomenal mixing of the world's insulary cultures, a breaking-down of walls hindering communication, and an adoption of the Western, antitheocratic invention of the open market of ideas, fusing all the world's population into the great 'world village' which Constantin Doxiadis calls Ecumenopolis. If this situation comes to pass, it will offer the freest opportunity for Christian witness -- verbal and non-verbal, kerygmatic and pragmatic -- which the church has ever known. At its present stage, this world culture already contains more individuals than all who have previously lived on this planet. Reliable indicators of the intentions of Providence are never available, but if ever an historical situation cried out for the appearance of an awakening, the present does: the cultural factors stand like a great empty dam, waiting for the flow of waters. The only questionable factors are these: is the present population searching for awakening (defined in terms of encounter with God)? and is the church prepared to be an instrument of that awakening?

I believe that we can sense in the younger generation an increasing hunger for such spiritual transformation. This is visible in some in their rejection of the status quo, and their search for ideals and causes in which to enlist. It is also evident in their use of primitive, pseudo-Christian life-styles, Eastern equivalents of the mystical experience which the established church has failed to offer them, and even 'artificial mysticism' through the use of drugs -- for this often is an expression of a desire for some kind of spiritual reality, a search for "the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night," as Allen Ginsberg says. But the uneasy longing for spiritual reality is apparent also in the phenomenal spread of the Pentecostal "third force," which offers a brand of spirituality which is deficient by Reformation standards, and often partakes of a counterfeit enthusiasm which Mather and Edwards would deplore, but which does offer something to fill the vacuum of the experience of God in the hearts of the masses. There are many today who are half-consciously looking for the vigor of Urchristentum, who turn away from theological refinements and 'relevant' projects with unsatisfied hunger. Searching in this way for contact with God, Thomas Merton turned away from the works of William Penn with the observation that they were "about as supernatural as a Sears Roebuck catalog," and sought help in John of the Cross. If we have no comparable strength from which to speak, we had better concede the game to the Catholic contemplatives and the Pentecostals; for the desire for spiritual reality is a great deal more ubiquitous than we sometimes think, and astonishing multitudes surround the Teresas, the Franckes, and the Wesleys of history when they speak.

As for the second factor in question: the lesson of the Great Awakening seems to be that the church is equipped to be an instrument of spiritual renewal whenever it manages to be at the same time fully biblical, and fully relevant, in its address to the culture. We are learning the second point well; we perhaps have much to recover -- or to discover -- with respect to the first. And we may have another lesson to grasp: the necessity of depending on the Spirit in the communication of Christianity. We are too prone to assume that because men around us do not instantly respond to Pauline theology this must be replaced, or at least quietly put into storage until the climate changes. The Puritans, who accepted as an essential necessity the sovereign operation of the Spirit in opening men's eyes to see the truth about themselves, about God, and about Christ, did not merely seek to reach the declining society of their time by echoing its insights and serving its projects. They continued to pray for an awakening, and to "throw the message like a stone," as Barth says, projecting the incomprehensible kerygma of grace and renewal even where it could not be understood, and calling on God for the miraculous gift of response. In this study we have seen Mather looking into the face of an alienated culture, polishing his weapons down to the irreducible biblical core so far as he could apprehend it, and praying for the power of the Spirit which alone could make those weapons victorious. Two years before his death, the expected awakening had begun to come in the Middle Colonies.

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